

MANORAMA

TELL ME WHY

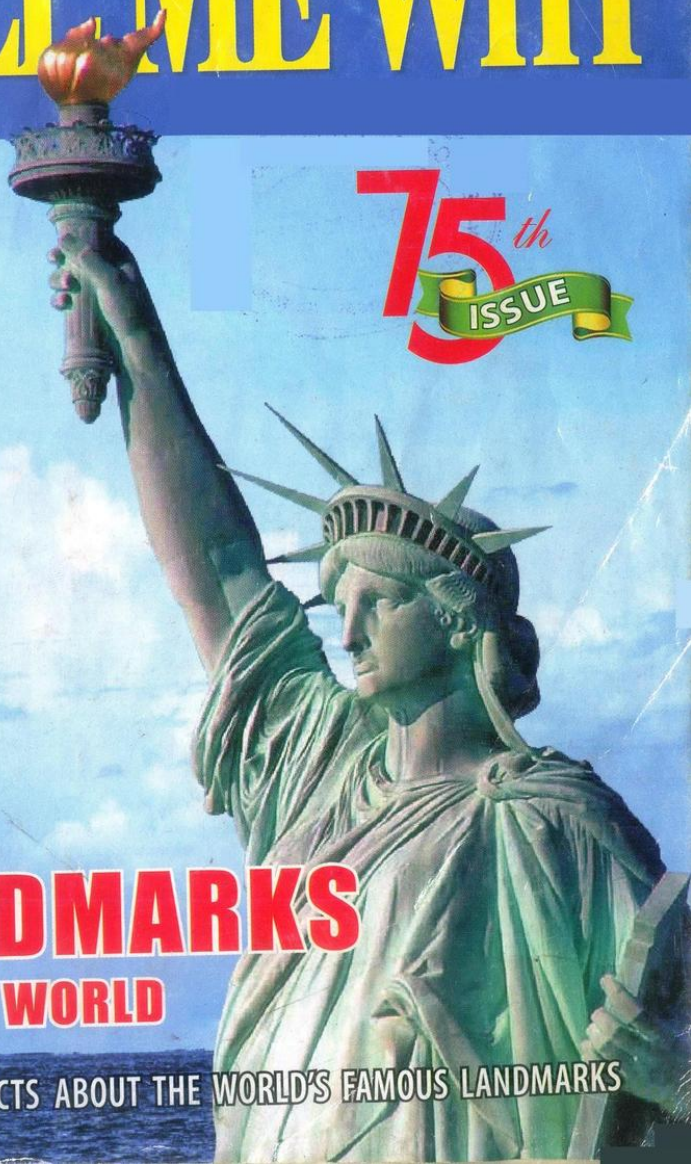
No:75



75th
ISSUE

75
LANDMARKS
OF THE WORLD

100 + FACTS ABOUT THE WORLD'S FAMOUS LANDMARKS



75th
ISSUE



MANORAMA

TELL ME WHY

From the house of MAGIC POT, MANORAMA YEAR BOOK, VANITHA,
THE WEEK & THE MALAYALA MANORAMA DAILY

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LANDMARKS

A landmark basically means something conspicuous that marks a place. It can be anything that's easily recognised from a distance, that has historical, cultural, or aesthetic importance. It could be a natural feature of a landscape, or even a man-made structure.

We use the word 'landmark' also to mean a significant event to mark a turning point. In this sense, this is a landmark issue for Tell Me Why.

To commemorate the significant, 75th issue of Tell Me Why, we are showcasing stunning 75 landmarks of the world - both man-made, and natural.

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LANDMARKS OF THE WORLD

Why did the people of France gift the Statue of Liberty to the USA?

When you think of the USA, the first thing that comes to the mind is the Statue of Liberty - a colossal statue of Roman goddess-Libertas holding aloft a torch, facing the Atlantic Ocean. The Statue of Liberty was a gift from the people of France to the citizens of the USA to celebrate the 100th year of the Declaration of Independence, which fell on the 4th of July, 1876.

The Statue of Liberty stands on Liberty Island, in New York Bay. It is over 46 metres tall. It is made of pure copper, and holds a gold plated torch in one hand to welcome those arriving



in America from across the ocean. The left hand holds a stone tablet representing the Declaration of Independence. There are broken chains representing freedom from bonds at the feet of the statue, and on its head, there is a crown with seven points. These seven points symbolize the seven seas and seven continents- and also the fact that people from all over the world are welcome in America.

The Statue of Liberty was designed by French sculptor Auguste Bartholdi.



Fastest Climb

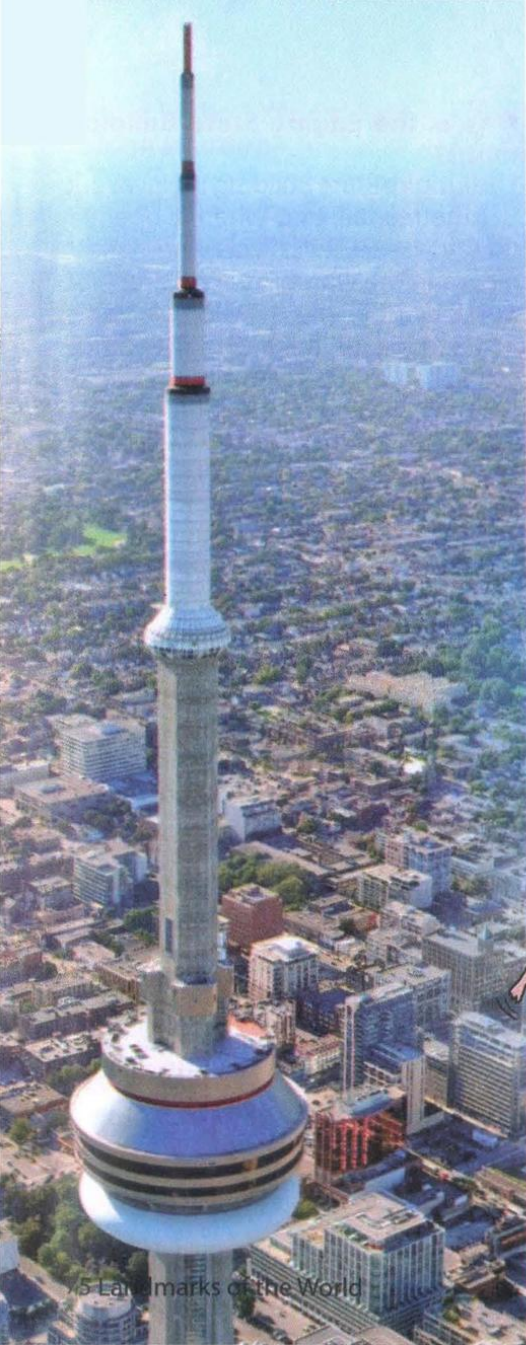
Brendan Keenoy, a police official, set the record for the fastest climb up to the sky pod of the CN Tower.

There are 2579 steps which he climbed in an amazing 7 minutes and 52 seconds!

Where is the CN Tower?

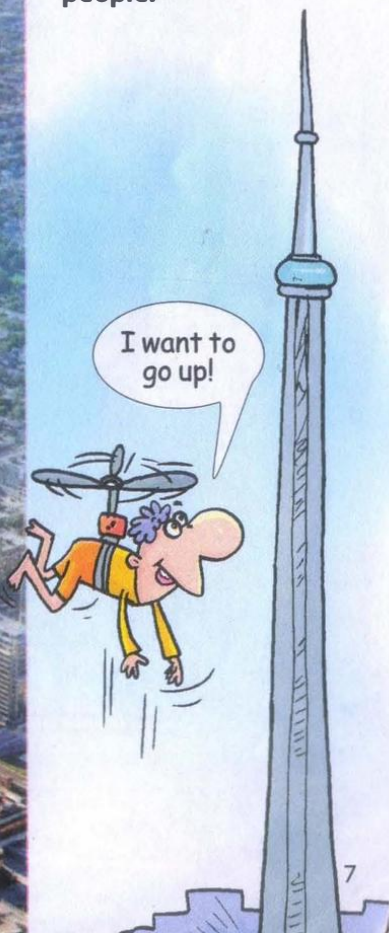
If you visit Toronto in Canada, you will be awestruck by a soaring tower that dominates the skyline. It is the CN Tower, which was the world's tallest free standing structure on land until 2010, when Dubai's Burj Khalifa officially took on the title. The tower has 147 floors leading to a sky pod, and a public observation deck. It was constructed by Canadian National Railroad to improve television reception, and is now a communications and observation centre.

The CN tower is built of glass, steel, concrete, and reinforced concrete and is 553.33 metres tall. Today, aside from serving as a hub for telecommunications across the city, the CN Tower has become a major tourist destination. Visitors can test their courage by walking across the glass floor 113 stories above the ground—the first of its kind in the world. Along with other attractions, it has a revolving restaurant that makes a complete rotation every 72 minutes, giving diners a changing view of Toronto.



Plane Crash

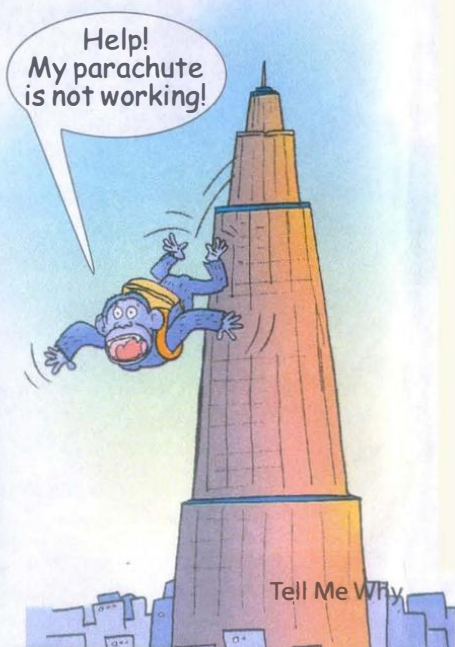
On Saturday, July 28th 1945, a United States military plane crashed into the 79th floor of the Empire State building. The accident, caused by heavy fog, killed 14 people.



Why is the Empire State Building famous?

The Empire State Building in New York is 381 metres tall, and when it opened on May 1st 1931, it was the tallest building in the world. It was the icon of New York City, the symbol of Man's dreams to soar higher and higher. Since then, it has captured the attention of generations, as more and more tourists flock to see it every year.

This skyscraper is 102 stories tall, and was designed by William Lamb. There are 1086 steps from the lobby to the 102nd floor, and the building has 73 elevators, and 6514 windows. The Empire State Building is considered to be an Art Deco masterpiece.



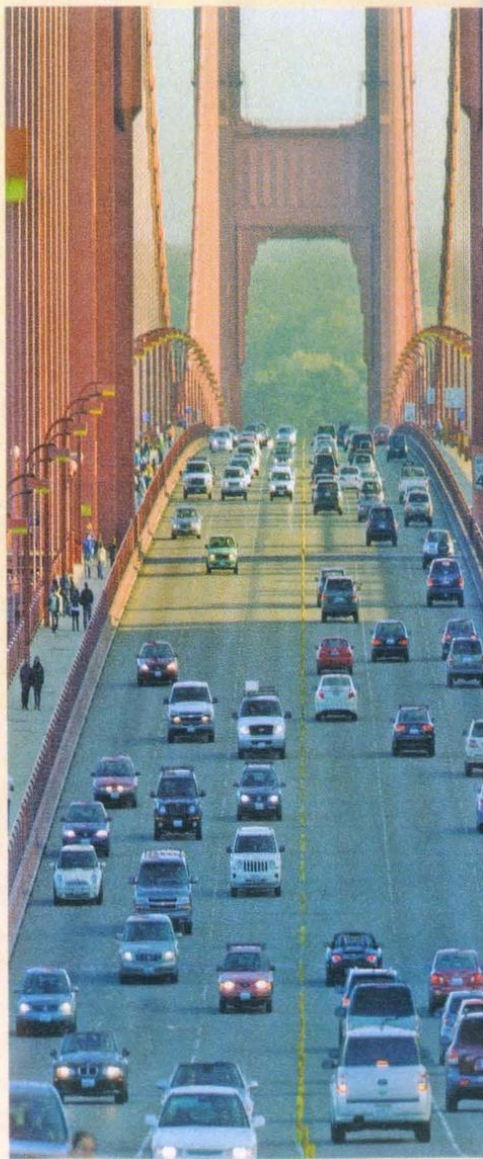
Tell Me Why

Why is the Golden Gate Bridge amazing?

The Golden Gate Bridge is one of the world's most beautiful bridges, and is an engineering marvel. Its soaring towers, sweeping main cables, and distinctive orange colour have made it one of the most famous landmarks in the world.

The bridge spans the Golden Gate Strait, which is the entrance to the San Francisco Bay from the Pacific Ocean. The total length of the bridge is 2737 metres. The dream of spanning the Golden Gate Strait had been around for well over a century before the Golden Gate Bridge opened to traffic in 1937.

The foundation piers had to be sunk into the violent, pounding waters of the open sea, something that was thought to be impossible. Today, the resulting bridge provides a connection between San Francisco and the surrounding northern counties. The Golden Gate Bridge is an internationally recognized symbol of San Francisco.



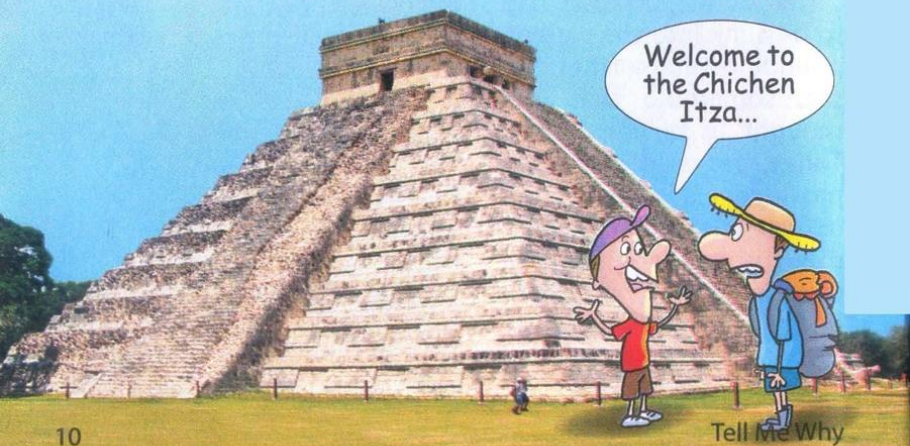
Why is Chichen Itza considered a marvel?

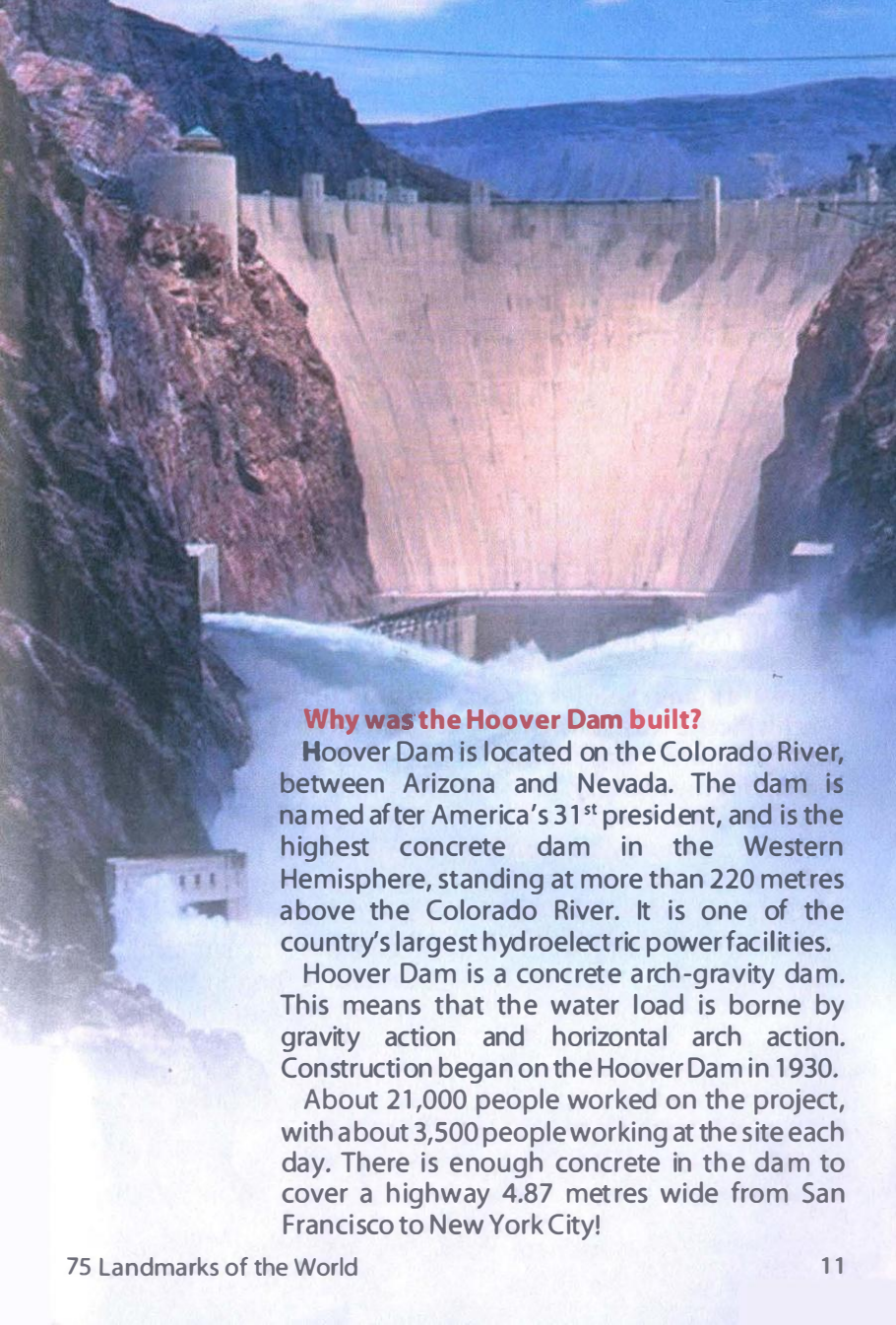
The famous monuments of Chichen Itza are over 1500 years old. They are one of the wonders of the Mayan civilization that existed in Mexico thousands of years ago.

The monuments consist of stepped pyramids and columned arcades. Chichen Itza was more than a religious and ceremonial site. It was also a sophisticated urban centre, and hub of regional trade.

The most recognizable structure here is the Temple of Kukulcan, also known as El Castillo. This glorious stepped pyramid demonstrates the accuracy and importance of Mayan astronomy. The temple has 365 steps – one for each day of the year.

What is truly marvellous is that twice a year, on the spring and autumn equinoxes, a shadow falls on the pyramid in the shape of a serpent. As the sun sets, this shadowy snake descends the steps to eventually join a stone serpent head at the base of the great staircase up the pyramid's side!





Why was the Hoover Dam built?

Hoover Dam is located on the Colorado River, between Arizona and Nevada. The dam is named after America's 31st president, and is the highest concrete dam in the Western Hemisphere, standing at more than 220 metres above the Colorado River. It is one of the country's largest hydroelectric power facilities.

Hoover Dam is a concrete arch-gravity dam. This means that the water load is borne by gravity action and horizontal arch action. Construction began on the Hoover Dam in 1930.

About 21,000 people worked on the project, with about 3,500 people working at the site each day. There is enough concrete in the dam to cover a highway 4.87 metres wide from San Francisco to New York City!

Why is Mount Rushmore the world's greatest mountain carving?

The Black Hills of South Dakota, USA are the backdrop for the world's greatest mountain carving at Mount Rushmore. Here, the faces of four great American Presidents, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln have been carved into the side of the 1745 metre mountain. Carved at a height of 152 metres, each face is an amazing 18 metre high sculpture of epic proportions. The sculptor, Gutzon Borglum began drilling into the 1745 metre high mountain in 1927, and took 14 years to complete the project. The proportions of each face were worked out on scale models, and then transferred to the granite rock face. Every year, millions of people visit this shrine of democracy at Mount Rushmore, for it is considered to be a symbol of freedom all over the world.

Machu Picchu

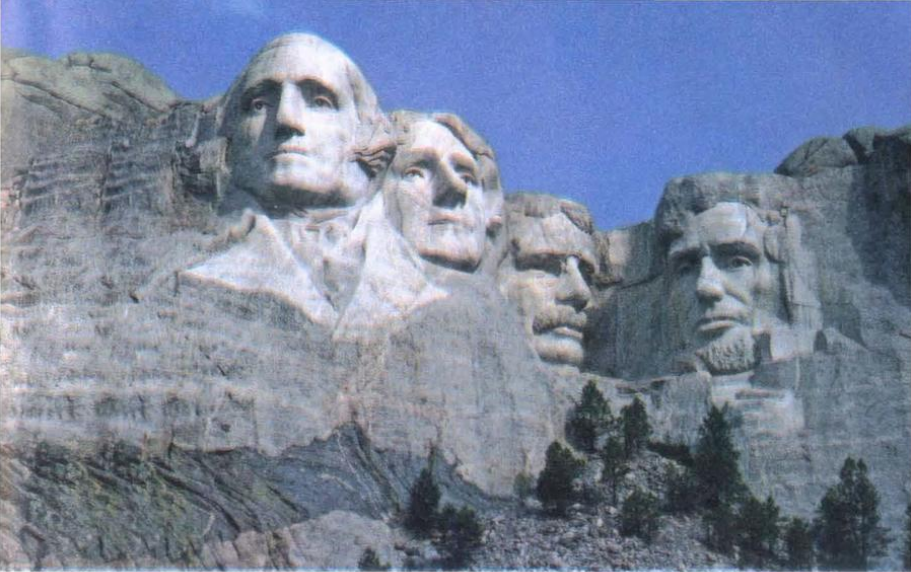
There are many theories why Machu Picchu was built. One theory is that it was a country retreat for the nobility. Another is that it was a religious sanctuary, and some believe that it was a place of worship, for either the Sun God, or other Inca deities.

Why is Machu Picchu a tribute to the Inca culture?

Machu Picchu was an ancient city located in the Andes Mountains. It was built more than 500 years ago, and is a UN World Heritage Site today.

One of Peru's most popular tourist attractions, Machu Picchu has an extraordinarily beautiful setting in the middle



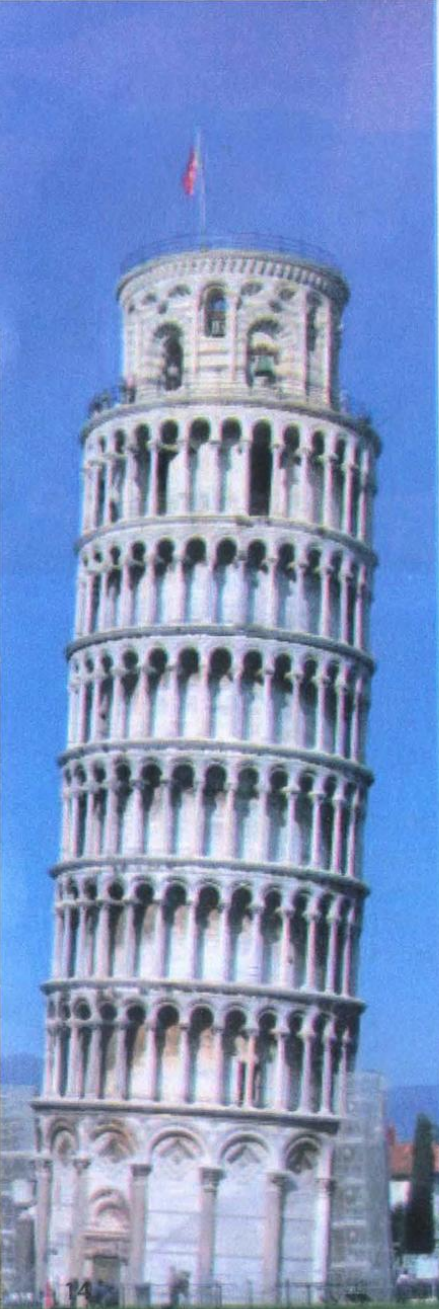


of a tropical forest, and is a tribute to the architectural excellence of the Inca Empire at its height. Machu Picchu is made up of more than 150 buildings, ranging from baths and houses to temples and sanctuaries.

Most cities built by the Inca civilization were destroyed by the Spanish conquest. However, Machu Picchu was in a hidden location – invisible from below – and so it was not found, making it one of the most well-preserved Inca cities.

I love
my Machu
Picchu!



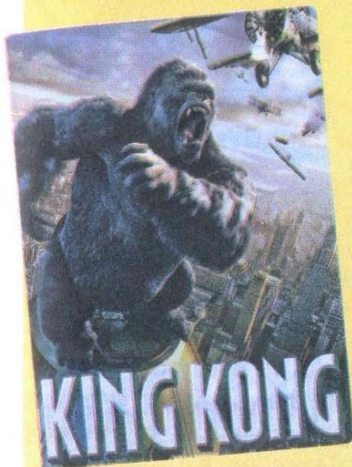


Why does The Leaning Tower of Pisa lean?

The Leaning Tower of Pisa, located in the Italian town of Pisa, is one of the most remarkable architectural structures from medieval Europe. The Pisa tower is one of the four buildings that make up the cathedral complex, called Campo dei Miracoli or Piazza dei Miracoli, which means Field of Miracles.



Tell Me Why



King Kong

The Empire State Building has featured in many films, the most famous being King Kong, a film about a great monkey. It is a romance that ends with Kong falling to his death from the top of the building.

The construction of the Tower of Pisa began in August 1173, and continued for about 200 years due to the onset of a series of wars. It was designed as a circular bell tower, and is constructed of white marble. The tower has eight stories, including the chamber for the bells.

Although it was designed to be perfectly vertical, it started to lean

during construction. What the architects failed to realize was that the soil was unstable, and the foundation was insufficient to support the tower.

Each year, the tower leans further – a millimetre each year. By 1990, the tower had leaned more than 5 metres out of line.

Engineers have worked to stabilize the foundation of the tower, and were successful in straightening the tower slightly, to prevent the tower from leaning further and toppling over.

Corrective Measures

By the end of the 20th century the Leaning Tower of Pisa was leaning more than 5 metres towards the south, and a rescue operation was begun. Engineers removed soil from under the north side of the tower to even out the differences in the foundation. The lean was reduced by more than 38 centimetres... a miracle in itself!

Tourist Favourite

The Eiffel Tower is visited by more than 6.5 million people every year.



Why is the Eiffel Tower considered a symbol of France's technological excellence?

The Eiffel Tower was built for the World Exhibition that was held to celebrate the Centenary of the French Revolution of 1789. It was meant to be a temporary construction, and was built so that it could be easily dismantled. However, more than a century later, it is still standing as a symbol of France's technological excellence.

The tower was designed by Gustave Eiffel, known for his revolutionary building techniques. Each one of the about 12,000 iron pieces was designed separately to get the exact shape needed, and these were then fitted together.

The Eiffel tower, inaugurated on March 31st 1889, is probably Europe's best known landmark.

Which is more amazing, that one or this one?



Tell Me Why



Going to the Top

There are 719 steps to reach the second level of the Eiffel Tower. Many people prefer to climb them, rather than take the lift. The stairs continue till the top, but are not open to the public.

What is Big Ben?

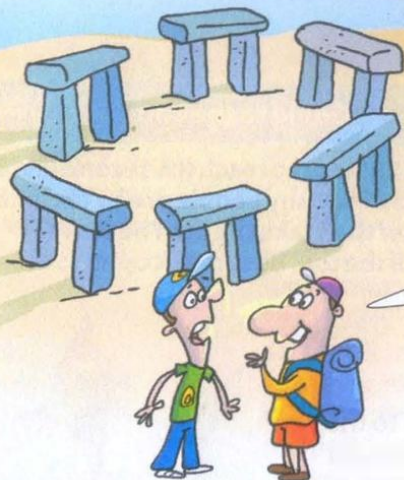
Big Ben is the name given to the massive bell inside the clock tower of the Houses of Parliament in London. It weighs more than 14 tonnes, and has four faces that are illuminated at night. Each of the dials is 7 metres in diameter, and the minute hands are four and a half metres long! Big Ben was the world's largest clock when it was installed in the middle of the 19th century. The name Big Ben actually refers to the clock's hour bell, the largest of the clock's five bells. The other four are used as quarter bells.

The clock has rarely stopped. Even after a bomb destroyed the Commons chamber during World War II, the clock tower survived.

Big Ben first rang across Westminster on 31st May 1859, and the chimes were first broadcast by the BBC on 31st December 1923, a tradition that continues to this day.

75 Landmarks of the World





Why is Stonehenge a puzzle?

Salisbury Plain, in Wiltshire, England is the site of one of the most puzzling monuments in the world, the stone monuments or megaliths of Stonehenge. This circular landmark of large, standing stones is a wonder to everyone, as Stonehenge probably dates back as far as 3100 BC. The stones are arranged in concentric circles, in a pattern whose astronomical significance is still being explored.

There are no written records as to why Stonehenge was built. Some

say that it was a place for dying, while others claim it was a place of healing. Some people believe that Stonehenge was built for human sacrifice, while others speculate that it is all about astronomy.

One of the major mysteries of Stonehenge is how it was built.

Stonehenge remains one of the most impressive prehistoric monuments in the world on account of its architectural design.



Why was the Arc de Triomphe built?

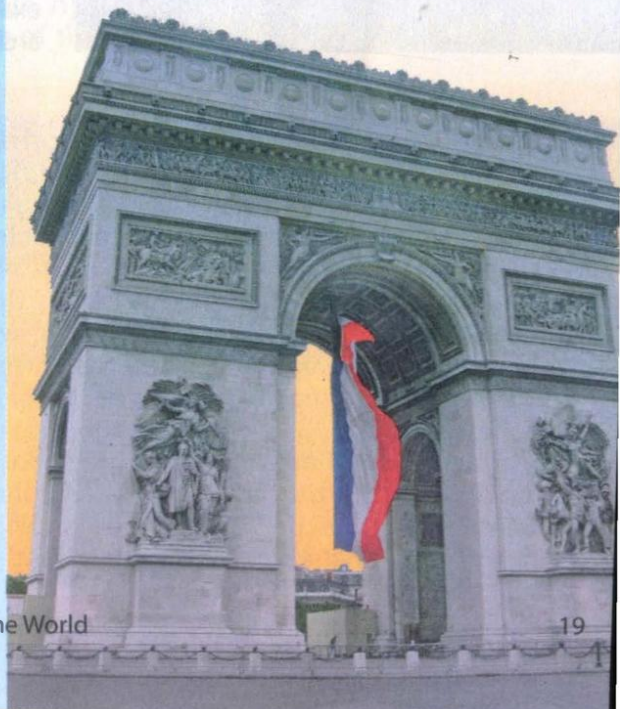
The Arc de Triomphe, the most monumental of all triumphal arches, was built between 1806 and 1836 to celebrate Napoleon's victory at the Battle of Austerlitz, over the combined Russian and Austrian armies. It stands at the centre of the Place Charles de Gaulle, at the western end of the Champs-Élysées in Paris.

This monument also honours all those who fought for France, especially in the Napoleonic Wars. Engraved on the inside, and at the top of the arch, are all of the names of the generals and wars fought. At the top of the arch are 30 shields, and each of them bears the name of one of Napoleon's successful battles. Below the arch is the Grave of the Unknown Soldiers, honouring the many who died during World War I.



Casa Mila

Casa Mila means 'the quarry,' and it is a building located in Barcelona, Spain. Casa Mila breaks with traditional architecture by using not a single straight line. The building does not use load-bearing walls, but rests on pillars and arches.





Why was the Alhambra Palace given this name?

The Alhambra Palace gets its name from the Arabic word 'Al Hamra', meaning 'The Red', which is a reference to the colour of its outer walls. It was built by the Moorish monarchs of Granada, in southern Spain.

The palace stands out as one of the most famous examples of Moorish architecture.

Why is the Brandenburg Gate of historical significance?

The Brandenburg Gate is situated at the end of a grand boulevard in Berlin. It was originally part of a wall surrounding Berlin, and was the main entrance to the city. It was constructed between 1778 and 1791.

Brandenburg Gate was designed by Carl Gotthard, and commissioned by Emperor Wilhelm II. The design was based on the Propylaea, the gateway to the Acropolis of Ancient Athens. In 1793, a statue depicting the goddess of victory bearing a symbol of peace was added.

The Brandenburg Gate was built as a symbol of peace. During the Cold War, when the gate was located right near the border between East and West Berlin, it became a symbol of a divided city.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Brandenburg Gate has become the symbol of a reunified Berlin.



destroyed the greater part of the winter palace. Moorish art was defaced, and some of the towers were blown up.

In course of time, the complex fell into disrepair. It was even used as soldiers' barracks during Napoleonic times.

For several centuries, the Alhambra Palace lay abandoned, until it was declared a national monument in 1870.

After the conquest of the city in 1492, alterations were made to the buildings within the Alhambra. In particular, Charles V rebuilt portions of the complex, and



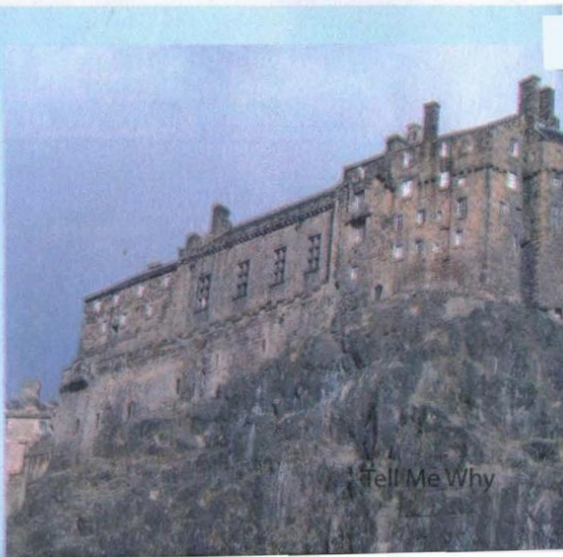


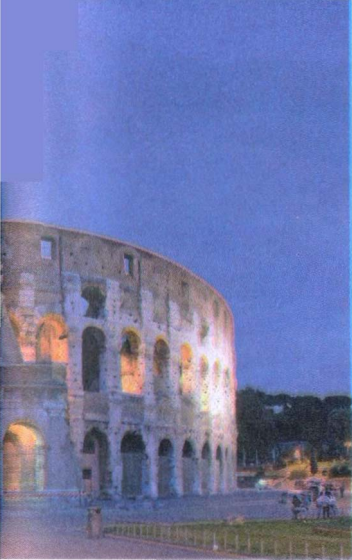
Why was the Colosseum the pride of Ancient Rome?

The Colosseum was one of the largest buildings in the Ancient Roman Empire. Emperor Vespasian, founder of the Flavian Dynasty, started construction of

Why is Edinburgh Castle dear to the Scottish people?

Edinburgh Castle dominates the city of Edinburgh in Scotland. Perched on a rock, known as Castle Rock, it looks exactly like a castle should, and has been the home of Scottish kings for centuries.





the Colosseum in AD 72. It was completed in AD 80, the year after Vespasian's death. The immense building was elliptical in shape, and measured 188 metres by 156 metres, with a height of more than 48 metres. It could accommodate some 55,000 spectators who could enter the building through 80 entrances.

Above the ground, there were four levels, and the upper level contained seating for lower classes and women. The lowest level was reserved for prominent citizens.

Below the ground were rooms with mechanical devices, and wild animals in cages that could be pulled up.

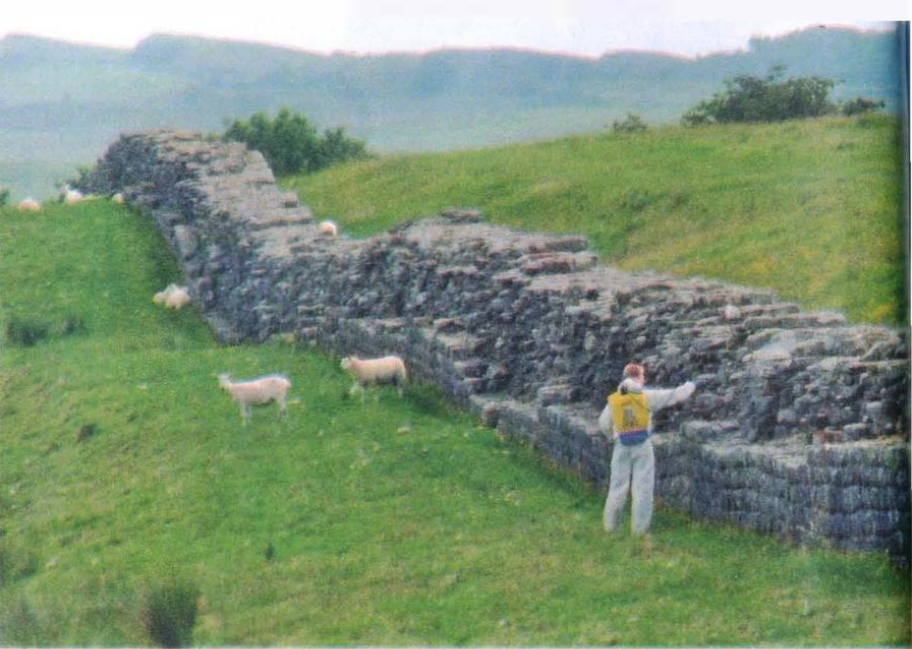
Emperors used the Colosseum to entertain the public with free games.

The Colosseum was, without doubt the pride of Ancient Rome because of its awe inspiring size and sheer magnificence.



Built in the early 9th century, the castle has a complex history as successive rulers added to its grandeur and made modifications. The castle is the home of the Crown Jewels of Scotland, the Stone of Destiny, the famous 15th century gun Mons Meg, the One O' Clock Gun and the National War Museum of Scotland.

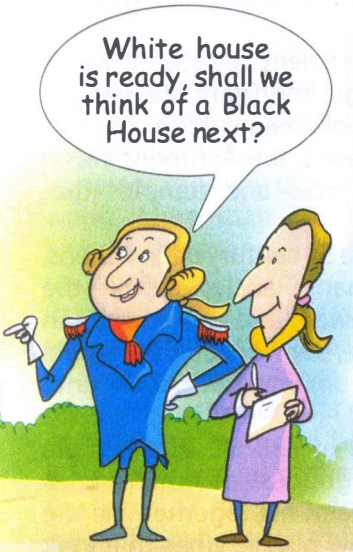
Edinburgh Castle is today the headquarters of the Edinburgh Garrison, and is the headquarters of several Scottish regiments as well.



Why was Hadrian's Wall built?

Hadrian's Wall was built across Britain, beginning in 122, by order of the Roman Emperor Hadrian. Its purpose was to keep Roman Britain safe from hostile attacks by barbarians. The wall also marked the northern most boundary of the Roman Empire until early in the 5th century. Hadrian's Wall stretched from the North Sea to the Irish Sea, and was about 117 kilometres long.

In addition to the wall, the Romans built a system of small forts that housed garrisons of up to 60 men, along every Roman mile of its entire length. There were also sixteen larger forts holding from 500 to 1000 troop that were built into the wall, with large gates on the north face. To the south of the wall, the Romans dug a wide ditch. Hadrian's Wall is one of the greatest monuments to the power- and limitations - of the Roman Empire.



White house
is ready, shall we
think of a Black
House next?

Why is the White House a significant monument?

The White House in Washington DC is a monument steeped in history. It was George Washington, the first President of the US, who chose the site for the White House.

The cornerstone was laid in 1792, and a design submitted by Irish-born architect James Hoban was chosen. After eight years of construction, President John Adams moved into the White House in 1800, and it has been the home of American presidents since then.

This beautiful white building has 132 rooms, and 35 bathrooms in, and is the only building in the world that is simultaneously the home of a head of state, the executive office of a head of state, and is regularly open to the public for tours.

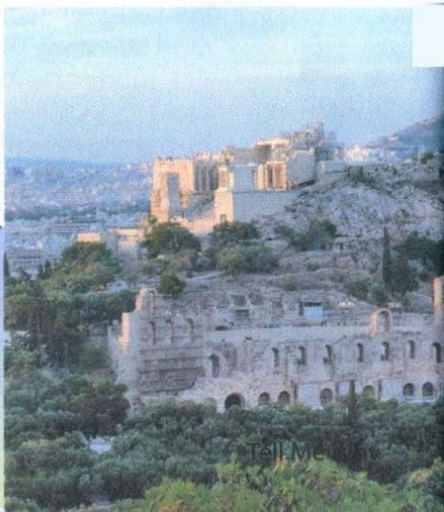
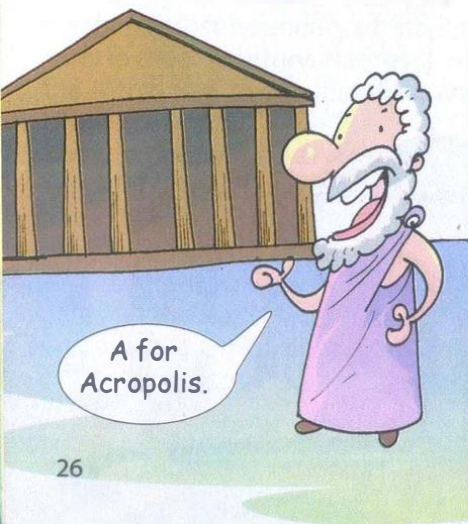


Why is the Acropolis of Athens a symbol of Ancient Greece?

Athens was the largest city in Ancient Greece. It was a beautiful and busy city, and the most important site within it was the Acropolis. The word Acropolis means 'high city', and from the 2nd millennium BC onwards, the Acropolis was a fortress protecting the royal palaces and temples that lay within it.

During the Classical period of the 5th century BC in Athens, the Greek general and statesman, Pericles rebuilt the Acropolis. The Propylaea or gateway, and the Parthenon were completed during his lifetime, but work on the Temple of Athena Nike and the Erechtheum was not begun until after his death.

The Parthenon was completed in 438 BC as a temple dedicated to Athena, the patron goddess of Athens. Each piece of the Parthenon is unique and fits together like the world's biggest and heaviest jigsaw puzzle. Lines that look straight are actually not. The Parthenon is the most perfect, and the most imitated building in the world. In fact, the Acropolis and the buildings within it are all without doubt, a tribute to the greatness of the civilization of Ancient Greece.



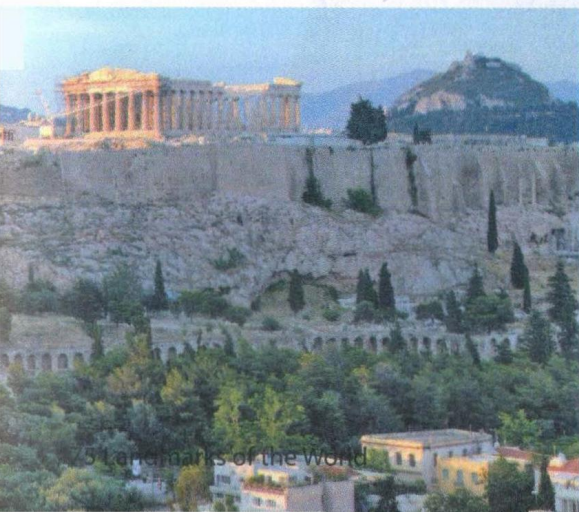
Why is the Channel Tunnel an engineering marvel?

The Channel Tunnel (also called the Chunnel) is the longest undersea tunnel in the world. More than 38 kms of the tunnel lie under the sea, linking the United Kingdom with France. The tunnel begins at Folkestone, England, and ends at Sangatte, France. This engineering marvel actually consists of three tunnels, each 50 km long and bored in the rock below the seabed of the channel. Two of the tubes are full sized, and accommodate rail traffic. In between the two train tunnels is a smaller service tunnel that serves as an emergency escape route. There are also several 'cross-over' passages that allow trains to switch from one track to another.



Akershus Fortress

Akershus Fortress is a medieval castle that was built to protect Oslo, the capital of Norway. Dating from 1299, this castle and royal residence developed into a fortress in 1592. Later, it was also used as a prison.

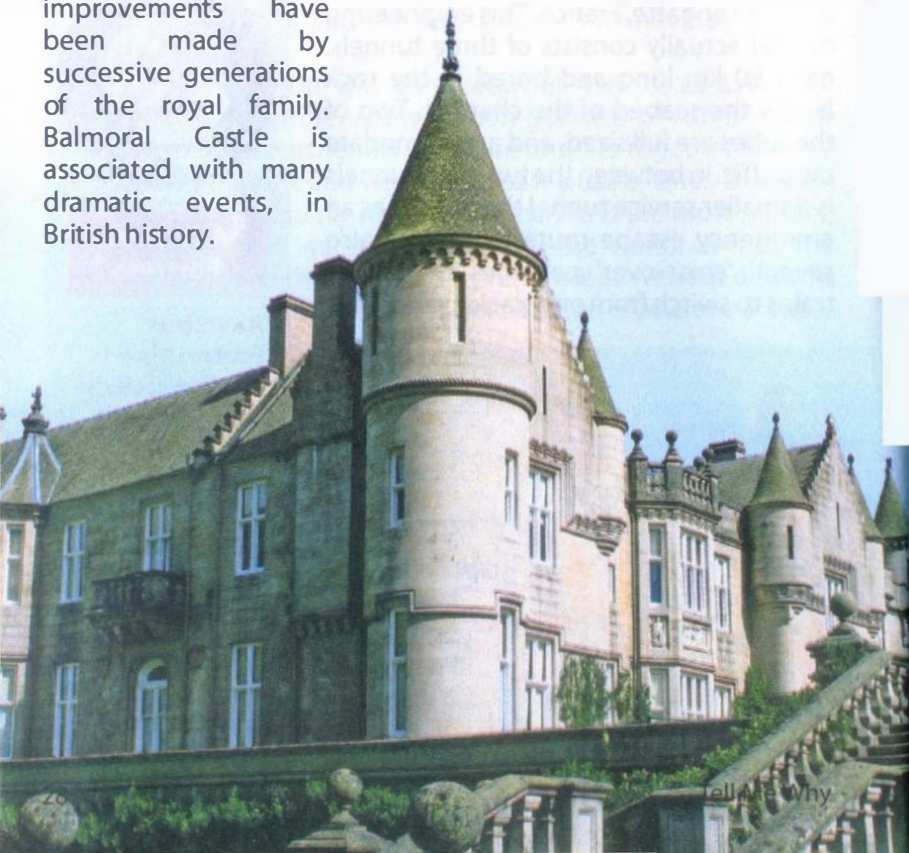


Why is Balmoral Castle associated with the British royal family?

Balmoral Castle in Scotland is one of the Queen's private residences. The castle is located on the large Balmoral Estate, a working estate which aims to protect the environment while contributing to the local economy.

The castle was built around 1854 for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Balmoral Castle and the original estate were purchased for Queen Victoria by Prince Albert in 1852. The original Balmoral Castle was built in the 15th century, but it was considered too small, and so, it was rebuilt. It's architect was William Smith of Aberdeen.

Over the years, improvements have been made by successive generations of the royal family. Balmoral Castle is associated with many dramatic events, in British history.



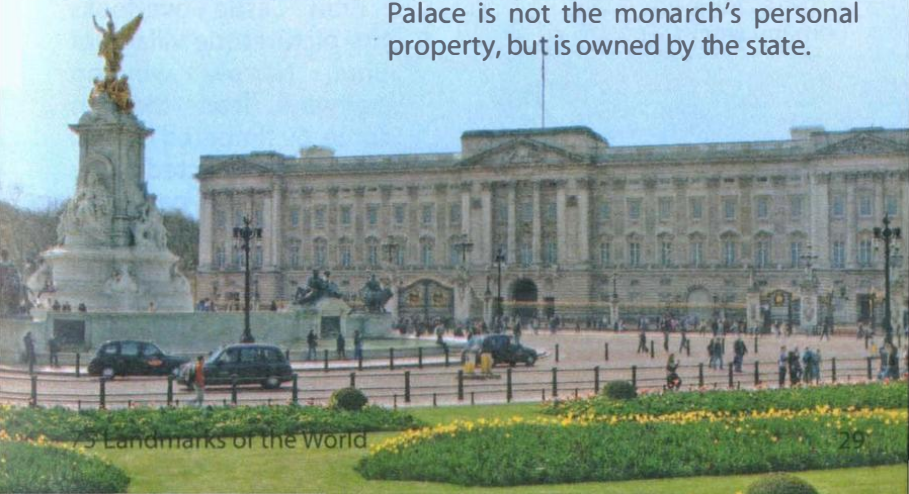
The Atomium

The Atomium is an extraordinary structure that has become a symbol of the spirit of Brussels, Belgium. It was the main pavilion and icon of the World Fair held in Brussels in 1958. It consists of steel clad spheres that are connected, so that the whole forms the shape of a unit cell of an iron crystal, magnified 165 billion times!

Why has Buckingham Palace been the focus of the British people?

Buckingham Palace in Westminster, London, has been the official residence of the British monarch since 1837. It is the administrative headquarters of the monarch as well. This sprawling palace has 775 rooms.

Buckingham Palace was originally a large townhouse built for the Duke of Buckingham in 1705. It was bought by King George III as a private residence for his queen. During the 19th century, it was enlarged, with three wings built around a central courtyard. Later, additions were made, and these include the balcony on which the royal family appears on special occasions to greet the crowds outside. The palace is furnished and decorated with priceless works of art that form part of the Royal Collection, one of the major art collections in the world today. Buckingham Palace is not the monarch's personal property, but is owned by the state.





Why is Bran Castle associated with Dracula?

Bran Castle, located in Transylvania, Romania, was originally a fortress built by the Knights of the Teutonic Order in the year 1212.

Later on, towards the end of the 13th century, it was taken over by the Saxons in that region in order to

protect the City of Brasov, an important trade centre.

From 1920 to 1957, Bran served as a royal residence, a gift of the people of Brasov to Queen Marie of Romania. The castle is now a museum open to tourists, displaying art and furniture collected by Queen Marie.

Bran Castle overlooks the picturesque village of Bran. Narrow winding stairways lead through some 60 timbered rooms, many connected by underground passages, which house collections of furniture, weapons, and armour dating from the 14th to the 19th centuries.

Bran Castle is associated with the legendary Count

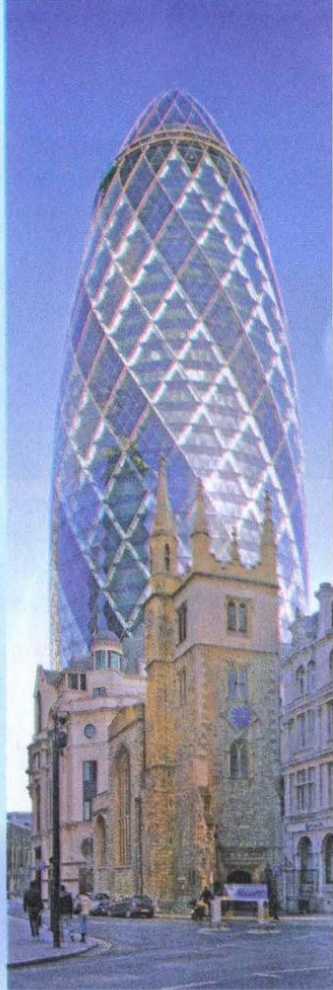


Why is 30, St. Mary Axe Known as 'The Gherkin'?

30, St Mary Axe is the address of a tall round office building in London that is known affectionately as The Gherkin, because of its distinctive shape that resembles the vegetable called gherkin (a small cucumber used for pickling).

The Gherkin was designed by Sir Norman Foster, and opened in 2004. It is in the heart of London's financial centre.

The exterior swirling striped pattern allows the air to flow up through spiralling wells, and is an energy saving measure. At the top is a glass conical dome, offering spectacular views of the city.



Dracula, whose story was told in 1897 by an Irish author, Bram Stoker. Stoker's story is based on the life of Vlad Tepes, a ruler who was greatly feared by his enemies. There are many legends about Vlad Tepes being a vampire who drank the blood of humans! His castle is supposed to be Bran's Castle, since its narrow corridors constitute a mysterious labyrinth of ghostly nooks and secret chambers easy to hide a 'vampire'.



Louvre Museum

The Louvre is the world's most visited museum. It is housed in the Louvre Palace, in the heart of Paris. The museum has a collection of over one million works of art.

Why is the Palace of Holyroodhouse famous?

The Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh is the Queen's official residence in Scotland. The palace is closely associated with Scotland's turbulent past, and with Mary, Queen of Scots, who lived here between 1561 and 1567.

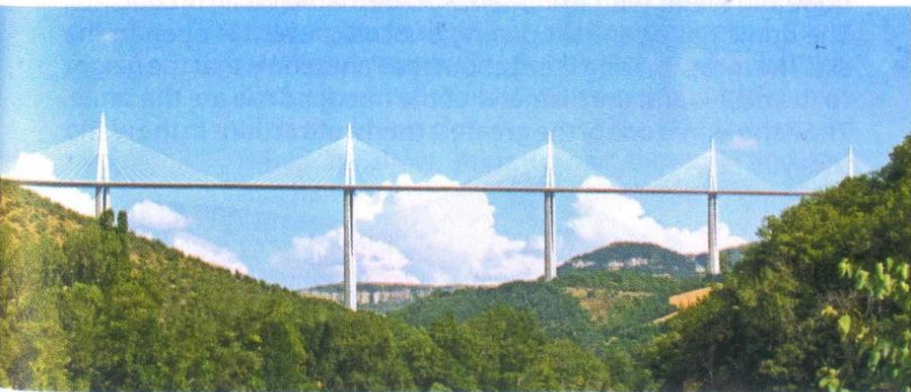
The palace was built by King David I of Scotland nearly 900 years ago. It was rebuilt by James V of Scotland. Later, it became the home of his daughter, Mary Queen of Scots. The Palace of Holyroodhouse has been the scene for many of the most dramatic and tragic events of her reign, culminating in the murder in the palace of her secretary, David Rizzio in 1566. The palace was rebuilt once again by Charles II, after the civil War

The events at Holyroodhouse have determined the fate of three countries - England, France, and Scotland.

Why is the Millau Viaduct an inspiration for engineers?

The Millau Viaduct is the tallest bridge structure in the world. Located near the southern end of France, the bridge spans the River Tarn.

The design of the bridge began with Michel Virlogeux, an engineer, and was later refined in a competition. Construction began in 2001, and took a little over three years. There were many unique challenges to be faced during the construction, and the bridge has many technological innovations. To a person looking at it, the bridge appears to have seven 'sails' floating across the valley- these are the seven cables. The tall slender piers are unusually shaped, and the roadway has a slight curve that gives an interesting effect.



Record Holder

The Millau Viaduct holds several records. It is the highest bridge tower in the world, it has the highest pylons in the world, and it has the highest road bridge deck in Europe!



Why is The Pantheon a wonder?

The Pantheon is an ancient temple in Rome that was dedicated to all the gods of the seven planets. In fact, Pantheon in Latin means 'temple of all gods'. It is the most complete building of Ancient Rome that still exists. The original Pantheon was built in 27 BC., but due to a huge fire, most of the buildings were destroyed along with the Pantheon.

The Pantheon building which we see today was actually reconstructed in 125 AD, during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian.

The entrance is a great portico of columns. The main building is huge and round, with an immense dome that was built of concrete. The dome has a central opening or oculus, which is open to the sky. The most amazing thing about the Pantheon is that the height to the oculus and the diameter of the interior circle are the same. The Pantheon is one of the greatest tourist attractions in the world today.

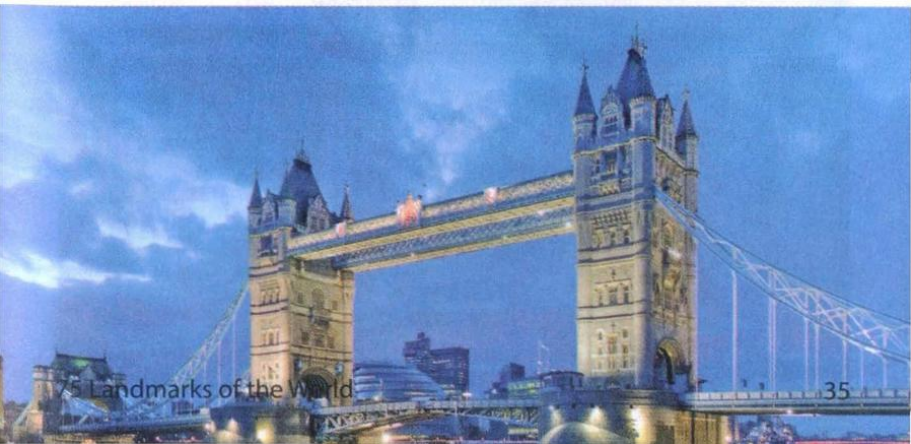


Why is the Tower Bridge remarkable?

The Tower Bridge is on the River Thames, right next to the Tower of London. In the middle of the 19th century, London was a very busy city, and the only place in the east to cross the River Thames was the London Bridge, which was always getting blocked because of the heavy traffic.

The Tower Bridge was the answer to the problem. Two massive piers were sunk into the river bed to support the construction, and over 11,000 tonnes of steel provided the framework for the towers and walkways. This framework was clad in Cornish granite and Portland stone to protect the underlying steelwork. Because of the fine masonry work of these towers, Tower Bridge is often mistaken for a stone bridge. It is a steel bridge however, and it depends entirely for its strength upon the steel columns and girders of which it is composed.

When it was built, it was the largest bascule bridge ever completed - the word 'bascule' comes from the French for 'see-saw'. The bridge could be raised to allow ships to sail through, and the mechanism to do this works on the principle of the see saw!





Coin Magic

Tourists also visit the Trevi Fountain to take part in a ritual coin toss. According to legend, if you toss a coin into the Trevi, then you will be assured a return trip to Rome, the Eternal City.

Why is the Trevi Fountain considered one of the most beautiful of Rome's fountains?

The Trevi Fountain in Rome is the largest, most beautiful, and most famous of the city's fountains. The site originally marked the end of the Aqua Virgo, an aqueduct constructed in 19 BC and built to bring water to the city from a spring more than 20 kms away.

The Trevi Fountain as we know it today, was designed by Nicola Salvi in 1732, and completed in 1762. The central figure is that of Neptune, God of the Sea, who is riding a shell





shaped chariot. The chariot is pulled by two sea horses, each guided by a Triton. One of the sea horses is calm, the other unruly.

These two sea horses symbolize the two contrasting moods of the sea. Neptune is flanked by statues representing Abundance and Salubrity.

Trevi Fountain has been the star of many films shot in Rome, including romantic films such as 'Three Coins in a Fountain' and 'Roman Holiday'.

Neuschwanstein Castle

Neuschwanstein Castle is a 19th century castle that was built as the personal refuge of King Ludwig II of Bavaria. Its spectacular setting and beauty have inspired the design of many castles later on. It has featured in many movies, and the castle in Walt Disney's movie 'Sleeping Beauty,' was based on its design. The castle is now open to the public, and is a popular tourist attraction.



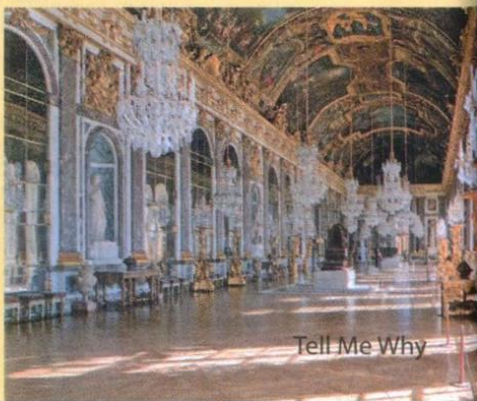
Why is the palace at Versailles historically important?

The palace at Versailles in France was built by the French King, Louis XIV. He was known as 'The Sun King', and he wanted to have a place where he could be away from the influence of his advisors, and establish his own court. However, the building of the palace continued throughout his life, and modifications were made during his son's reign as well. His grandson, Louis XVI also continued making changes, until he was forced to return to Paris during the French Revolution.

After the Revolution, Napoleon spent his summers at Versailles until he abdicated. Later, it was Louis-Phillipe who, in 1830, transformed the chateau into a grand museum, dedicated to 'the glory of France'.

Hall of Mirrors

The Hall of Mirrors is one of the most famous features of the palace. It is a long gallery with over 400 mirrors covering its walls. The beautifully decorated ceiling is covered with exquisite paintings.





towers above the palace, is an exquisite piece of architecture that reflects the Church's supremacy in France

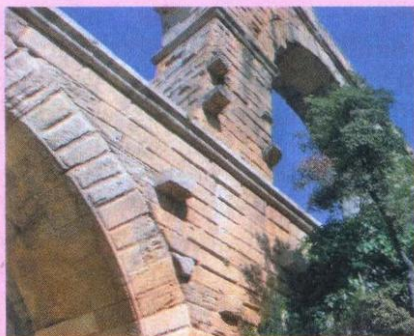
The Palace at Versailles is not only the largest palace in Europe, it also has the largest palace garden. There are also a couple of smaller palaces in the garden—the Grand Trianon and the Petit Trianon. The palace has witnessed many historic moments, including the signing of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I.

The Hall of Mirrors, the Grand Apartments and the Royal Opera are some of the marvels of this palace. The chapel, which

I'm the Sun
king and I want a
galaxy palace.



75 Landmarks of the World



Pont du Gard

Pont du Gard is an ancient bridge in Southern France. It was built by the Romans, and is part of an aqueduct that carried water from a spring to a Roman colony 50 kms away. Built in the 1st century AD, the Pont du Gard is the highest of all the Ancient Roman aqueduct bridges.

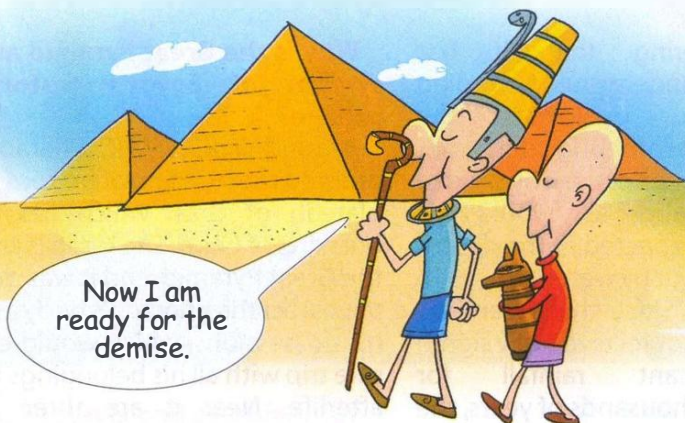


Why were the windmills at Kinderdijk built?

Kinderdijk, in the Netherlands, is a village situated at the confluence of two rivers, the Lek and Noord. The dominating feature of the landscape of Kinderdijk is its windmills. The windmills were erected in the 1600's to drain the Alblasserwaard polders, which had suffered floods since the 13th century. Large canals were dug to get rid of the excess water in the polders. However, the drained soil started setting, while the level of the river rose due to the river's sand deposits. After

a few centuries, an additional way to keep the polders dry was required. It was decided to build a series of windmills to drain the water into a reservoir from which it could be pumped out into the river. Nineteen windmills were built, and these have been beautifully preserved in a pristine condition.

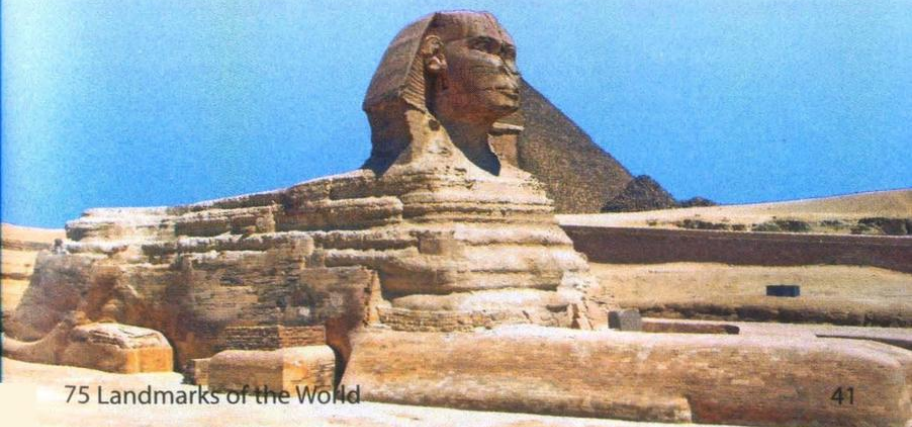




Why is the Great Sphinx considered mysterious?

Near the pyramids of Giza in Egypt is an enormous statue carved out of limestone that has the face of a man and the body of a lion which is lying down. This is the Great Sphinx, which was believed to have been built by the Pharaoh Khafre around 2530 BC. Its face is that of the pharaoh, and it is the guardian of Khafre's tomb, protecting it from evil spirits.

A part of the Sphinx's face has been damaged, but what makes it truly mysterious is the weath-



ering that it has undergone. According to geologists, the weathering has not been caused by wind or sand as would be expected in the desert, but by water!

Since the desert has not received any significant rainfall for thousands of years, the question as to the source of the water remains a mystery. Could the Sphinx be part of a civilization far older than the Egyptian civilization-one that lay near the ocean? No one really knows.

Why is the Great Pyramid at Giza a symbol of Egypt's history and culture?

Around circa 2,550 BC., Pharaoh Khufu ordered the building of his tomb on the plateau of Giza, which lies on the outskirts of Cairo. The tomb is known as the Great Pyramid, and it was designed to protect the pharaoh's body as well as his possessions, which would ensure a safe trip with all his belongings into the afterlife. Near it are three smaller pyramids which are believed to hold the pharaoh's queens.

The Great Pyramid of Giza was the tallest man made structure in the world for 3800 years. It consists of 2 million limestone blocks, each weighing from 2.5 to 15 tonnes. It is a mystery even today how the Egyptians manoeuvred these heavy blocks, and many theories have been put forward. It is believed that the stones were carried using wooden sleds, levers, papyrus twine and ramps.

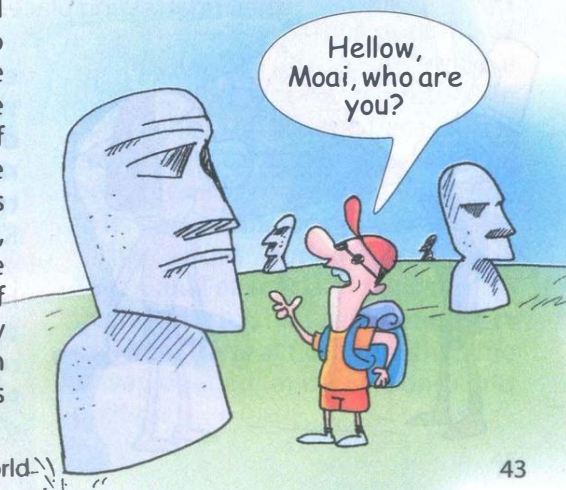




Why is Easter Island astonishing?

Easter Island lies more than 3218 kilometres from the shores of Chile and Tahiti. On the island's southeast coast, there are nearly a hundred huge, megalithic monuments carved in a stylized manner to resemble male human heads with elongated features. Some 800 additional statues remain in a quarry, or scattered about the island. The statues average about 4 metres in height, 1.5 metres in width, and weigh an average of 14 tonnes.

These statues are known as 'moai' to the islanders, but no one knows who carved them, or what their significance is. Another astonishing thing is how the island came to be populated, and how the isolated island people managed to make, and move the immense moai. The engineering feat of moving moai from the quarry to their sites remains unexplained, particularly since there is no evidence of wheels, or a pulley system through which such massive blocks could be transported.





What is the Valley of Kings?

The valley of the Kings is a magnificent valley in Egypt, located west of the Nile River. The valley contains many tombs of the pharaohs of the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt.

Tuthmosis I was the first pharaoh to be buried here, and it was his idea to create the valley. Other pharaohs such as Tutankhamun, Seti I, and Ramses II, as well as queens, high priests, and other nobles of the 18th, 19th, and 20th dynasties all have made the Valley of Kings their final resting place.



Make this
a Valley of
Kings.

All the tombs were elaborately stocked with everything that the deceased person might need in the afterlife. The tombs in the Valley of Kings are well hidden, yet most of them have been robbed of their treasures by tomb robbers. So far, 63 tombs have been discovered.

A satellite image of the Suez Canal, showing the artificial waterway cutting through the desert landscape of Egypt. The canal is a dark, winding line that connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. The surrounding land is a mix of sandy desert and some green vegetation along the canal's edges.

What is the importance of the Suez Canal?

The Suez Canal is a man-made waterway that connects the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. It is 163 kilometres long, and almost fifty ships travel through it every day.

When Egypt was occupied by the French in the 18th and 19th centuries, a private group called the Suez Canal Company was formed to oversee a canal project. The idea was not a new one- attempts to build such a canal had been made in Egypt for centuries, but it became a reality only in the 19th century.

Work on the canal began on April 25th, 1859, but it was not completed until ten years later in November 1869. The Suez Canal is important because otherwise, if somebody wanted to sail from Europe to Asia, they would have to travel all the way around Africa! Another option was that they would have to undertake a difficult, and long land route. The Suez Canal is important, because it is considered to be the shortest link between the east and the west, due to its geographic location.

This unique position makes the Suez Canal of special significance to the world. It has had a dramatic effect on world trade almost from the time it was opened, and even on world politics.

*Suez Canal:
Satellite Image*

Why was the Forbidden City called 'forbidden'?

The Forbidden City in Beijing, China, is not a city- it is a palace complex that was the residence of twenty-four emperors during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Ancient Chinese astronomers believed that the purple star or Polaris, was in the centre of Heaven, and that the Heavenly Emperor lived in the Purple Palace. The palace for the emperor on Earth was therefore, called the Purple City. It was forbidden to enter the palace without special permission from the emperor. This is why the complex was called 'The Purple Forbidden City', which was shortened to 'The Forbidden City'.

The Forbidden City is the world's largest palace complex, and covers 74 hectares. It is surrounded by a 52 metres wide moat, and a 10 metre high wall. The wall has a gate on each side. The bricks for the wall were made from white lime and glutinous rice while the cement is made from glutinous rice and egg whites. These incredible materials make the wall extraordinarily strong.

There are more than 8,700 rooms in the complex. Construction of the palace complex began in 1407, and was completed in 1420, and then the capital city was moved from Nanjing to Beijing the next year.

Since yellow is the symbol of the royal family, it is the dominant colour in it. Roofs are built with yellow glazed tiles and decorations in the palace are painted yellow.



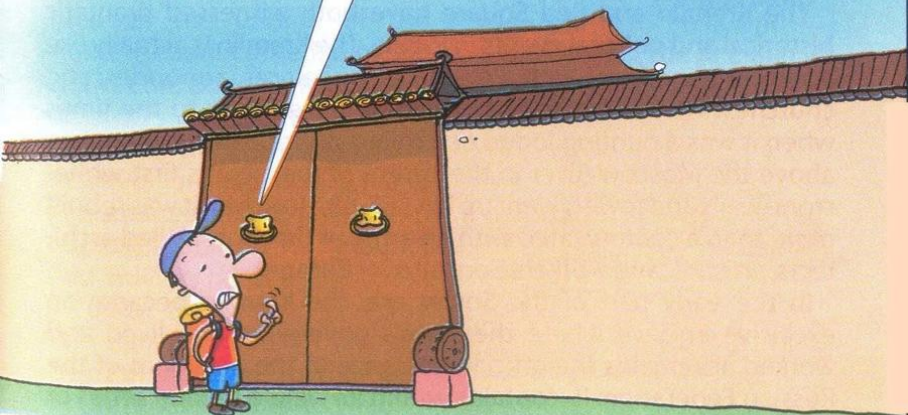


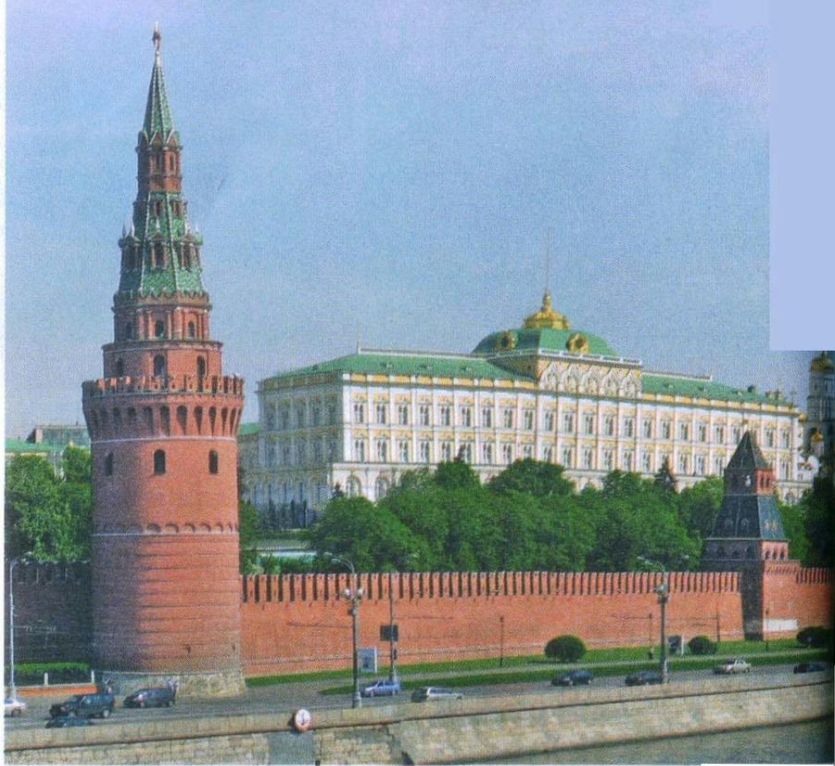
Even the bricks on the ground are made yellow by a special process! Is it any wonder that the Forbidden City is one of the world's most famous palaces?

Why is Windsor Castle special?

Windsor Castle is one of the residences of the British Royal family. It is located in the county of Berkshire, and the original castle was built by William the Conqueror after the Norman invasion. It has been used by a succession of monarchs.

No doubt,
truly a forbidden
city.

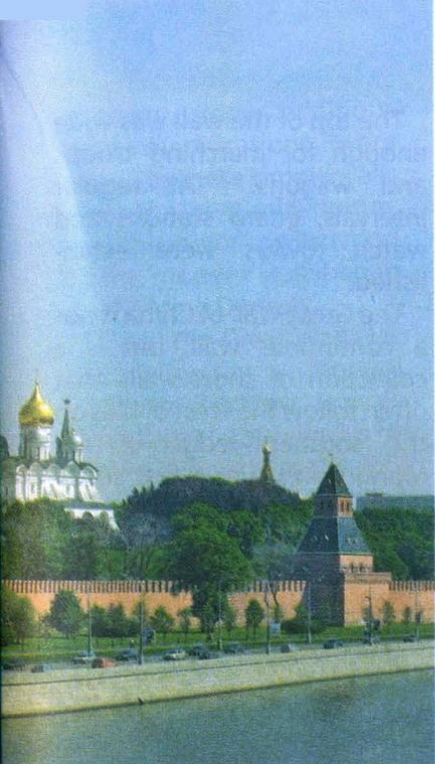




Why are the Kremlin and Red Square heritage sites?

The Kremlin and Red Square have both witnessed dramatic historical and political events in Russia. The Kremlin is actually like a self contained city, with a multitude of palaces, armouries, and churches. The Kremlin's history can be traced back to the times when it was a hunting lodge of a ruling prince. The Kremlin rises above the Moscow River in the centre of the city. Its first white-stone walls and towers went up in 1367-68. However, it was rebuilt more than a century later, with an army of the most skilled architects, artisans, and workers from all over Europe.

In the early part of the Soviet era, the Kremlin became an exclusive enclave where the state's governing elite lived and worked. It remains the official residence of the president of the Russian Federation. It contains within its walls a unique series of



Hermitage Museum

The Hermitage Museum is one of the largest and oldest museums in the world. Located in St. Petersburg, Russia, it has more than three million works of art and artefacts. Among them are paintings, graphic works, sculptures, and works of applied art and archaeological items.

masterpieces of architecture such as the Church of the Annunciation, Cathedral of the Dormition, and the Bell Tower of Ivan Veliki. The Kremlin stands on the west side of the massive, bricked Red Square. The square area has served as a marketplace, festival ground, and military parade ground.

Today, the Kremlin and The Red Square, form not just the heart of Moscow, but the heart of the Russian nation as well.



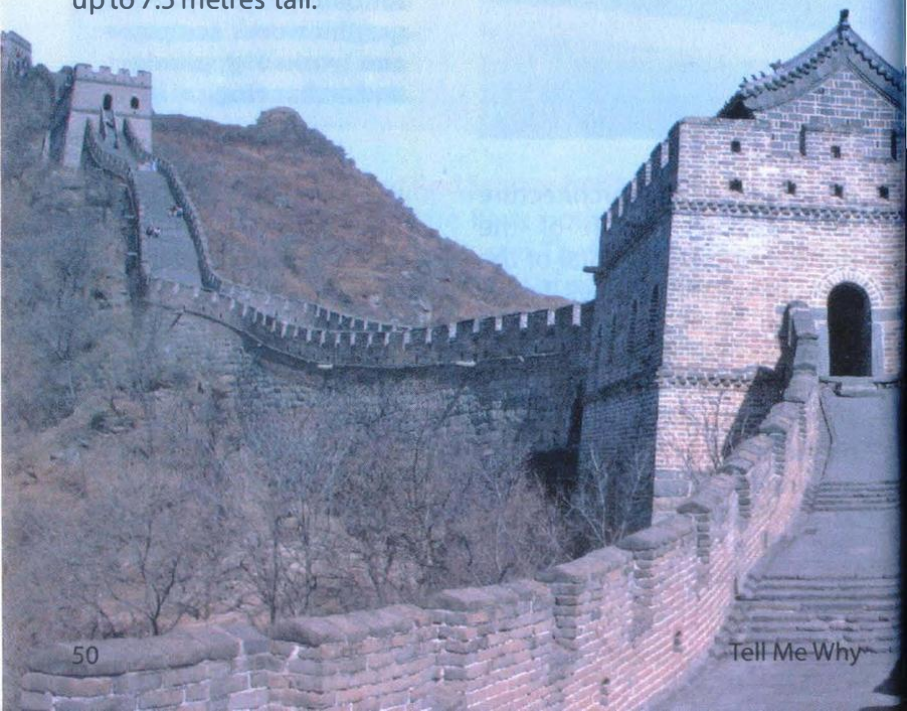
Why is the Great Wall of China called 'great'?

The Great Wall of China is the largest man made construction on our planet. It was built over 2,000 years ago, by Qin Shi Huangdi, the first emperor of China.

Like a gigantic dragon, the Great Wall winds up and down across deserts, grasslands, mountains and plateaus, stretching approximately 8,851.8 kilometres, from east to west. Its thickness ranged from about 4.5 to 9 metres and it was up to 7.5 metres tall.

The top of the wall was wide enough for marching troops and wagons. At regular intervals, guard stations and watch towers were established.

The Great Wall of China is not a continuous wall, but is a collection of short walls that often follow the crest of hills on the southern edge of the Mongolian plain. A first set of walls, designed to keep Mongol nomads out of China, were built of earth and stones in wood frames during the Qin



Dynasty. Some additions and modifications were made to these simple walls over the next millennium, but the major construction of the 'modern' walls began in the Ming Dynasty.

Since the Great Wall was discontinuous, Mongol invaders had no trouble breaching the wall by going around it, so the wall proved unsuccessful, and was eventually abandoned. Restoration and rebuilding took place in the 20th century, and in 1987 the Great Wall of China was made a World Heritage Site.



Bird's Nest

The National Stadium was built for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. Located at the Olympic Green, it has a floor space of 258,000 sq metres, and was dubbed the 'bird's nest' because of its innovative grid formation. The twig-like structural elements and the bowl-shaped roof are the highlights of the project.

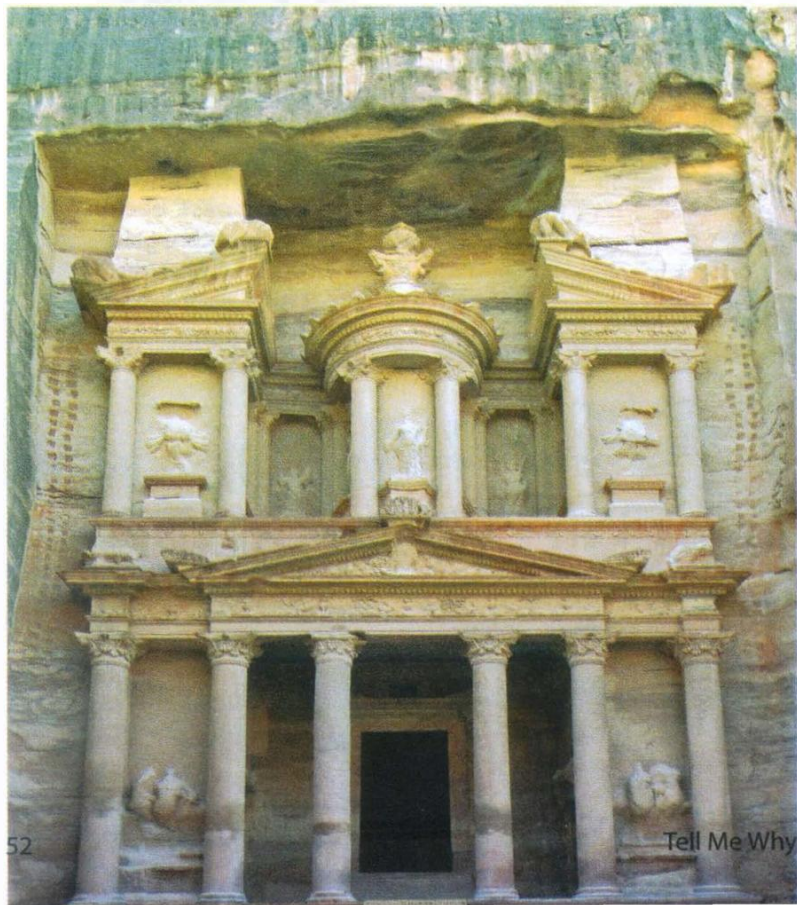


My dear horse, make a great jump, this is the great wall!

Why is Petra one of Jordan's treasures?

The ancient city of Petra was literally carved from the sandstone cliffs of southern Jordan by the Nabataeans, an industrious Arab people who settled here more than 2000 years ago. They built temples and tombs, houses and halls, altars and aqueducts. Petra was an important junction for the silk, spice and other trade routes that linked China, India and southern Arabia with Egypt, Syria, Greece and Rome.

At its peak, the city of Petra was home to some 20,000 Nabataeans who, in the midst of the desert, built an ingenious



system of waterways to provide their city with the precious liquid. Entrance to the city is through a narrow gorge, which is flanked on either side by soaring, 80m high cliffs. The colours and formations of the rocks are dazzling. The treasury at Petra has a massive façade, carved out of the sheer, dusky pink rock-face and dwarfing everything around it. It was carved in the early 1st century as the tomb of an important Nabataean king, and represents the engineering genius of these ancient people.

Petra means 'rock' in Greek which is a fitting name for a town literally carved out of sandstone desert cliffs. It was unknown to the western world until it was discovered in the early 1800's. Since then, clues to daily life in this 'lost city of stone' are being unearthed, and today we are beginning to see once again what Petra looked like 2,000 years ago.

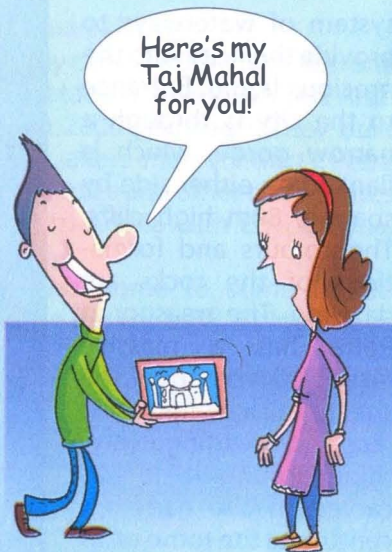


Why are Petronas Twin Towers a symbol of modern Malaysia?

The Petronas Twin Towers in Malaysia were two of the tallest buildings in the world till 2004. These twin skyscrapers are 452 metres tall, and have 88 storeys.

The construction took three years- from 1995 to 1998. Apart from offices, these awesome towers also house a state-of-the-art concert hall- the Petronas Philharmonic Hall, home of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra- as well as shopping arcades, restaurants, and a science museum. Special features of the towers include the double decker sky bridge between the 41st and 42nd floors, and double decker elevators.

The Twin Towers were built to house the headquarters of Petronas, the national petroleum company of Malaysia. The plan for each tower is identical- an 88 storied eight-lobed circular structure, and a pyramid-shaped pinnacle, surmounted by a slender steel spire. Malaysia today is experiencing a period of unprecedented growth, and the Petronas Twin towers are the proud symbols of this growing prosperity.



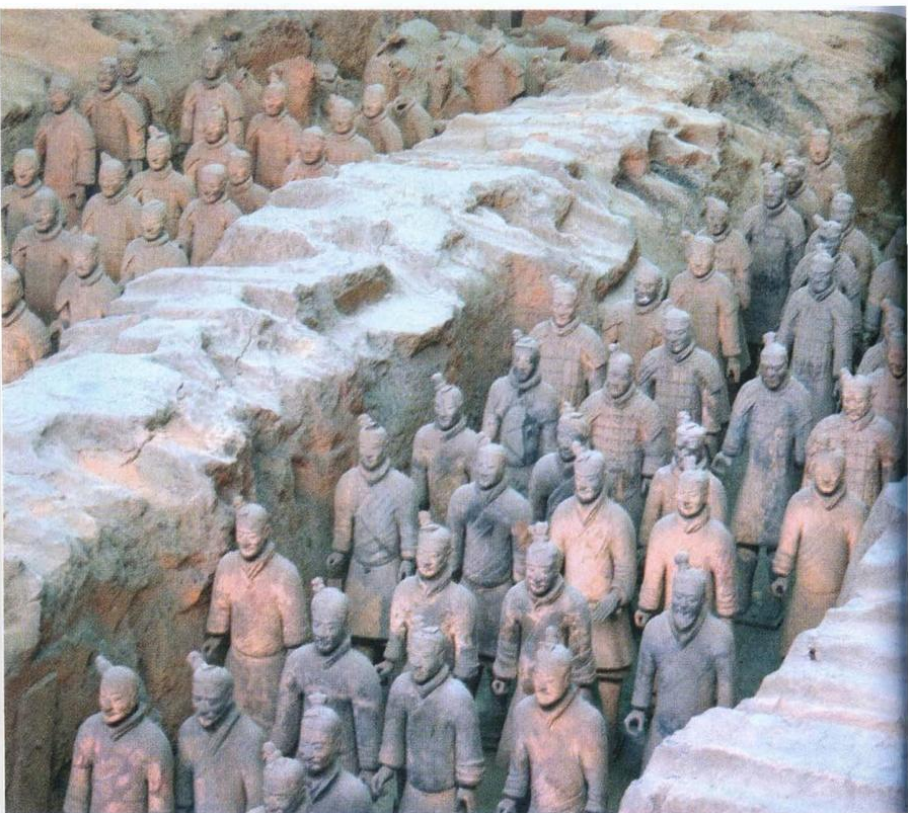
Why is the Taj Mahal considered a symbol of true love?

The Taj Mahal in Agra is considered to be the most beautiful monument built by the Mughals, the Muslim rulers of India before the arrival of the British. The Taj Mahal was built by the Emperor Shah Jahan as the mausoleum for his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, whom he married in 1612. She bore him 14 children, and when she died during childbirth in 1631, he was totally devastated. It is said that his grief was so intense that his hair turned completely white.

Shah Jahan was determined that the depth of his love for Mumtaz Mahal should be expressed by creating for her the most magnificent mausoleum the world had ever seen. The result was the Taj Mahal, a poem in white marble. It was built over twenty two years, with marble brought from Rajasthan. Materials were brought in from all over India and Central Asia, and it took a fleet of 1000 elephants to transport it to the site. The Taj Mahal was designed by the Iranian architect Ustad Isa, and expert craftsmen from different places were employed.

Standing majestically on the banks of River Yamuna, the Taj Mahal rises on a high red sandstone base, topped by a huge white marble terrace. Its famous dome is flanked by four tapering minarets. Within the dome lies the jewel-inlaid cenotaph of the queen. Later, Shah Jahan was also entombed beside his wife. The purity of the white marble, the exquisite ornamentation, the precious gemstones used, the magnificent gardens, and the picturesque location, all make the Taj Mahal one of the wonders of the world. Here, an Emperor and beloved lie side by side for all time, making the Taj Mahal the symbol of everlasting love.





What is the terra-cotta army?

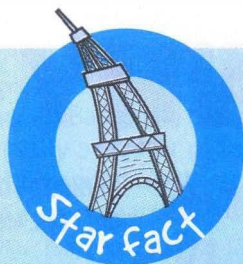
The terracotta army is an army that was found buried in front of the Emperor Qinshihuang's tomb in China. Its purpose was obviously to defend him in the afterlife. The army was made completely out of clay, over 2000 years ago. Archaeologists have discovered over 6000 life-size terracotta soldiers. Some of the statues they found are kneeling with terracotta bows, ready to shoot, others have moustaches, while some have armour. Archeologists have also found terracotta horses, spears, and chariots - all life-



size, all made out of clay, each unique.

The tomb itself is awe inspiring. 700,000 forced labourers were sacrificed to construct it. Heaven and Earth are represented in the tomb's central chamber. The ceiling, inlaid with pearls, represents the starry heavens. The floor, made of stone, forms a map of the Chinese kingdom. A hundred rivers of mercury flow across it. All the treasures were protected by deadly booby-traps... and by the terracotta army.

The craftsmanship of each of the statues is stupendous. The Ancient Chinese craftsmen solved the perplexing problem of how to make the statues of soldiers free-standing by constructing each of the hollow statues upon solid legs. This life sized army of painted clay soldiers is truly a dazzling, unforgettable sight.



Arranged by Rank

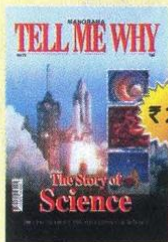
The soldiers of the terracotta army may not be alive- but they are arranged according to their rank, and placed in battle positions, just like real soldiers. Each of their painted individually moulded faces is different, and it's believed that they were based on true people.



WHY

do clouds have different shapes
are some insects attracted towards light
does the moon follow us when we drive

?



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hunt!*



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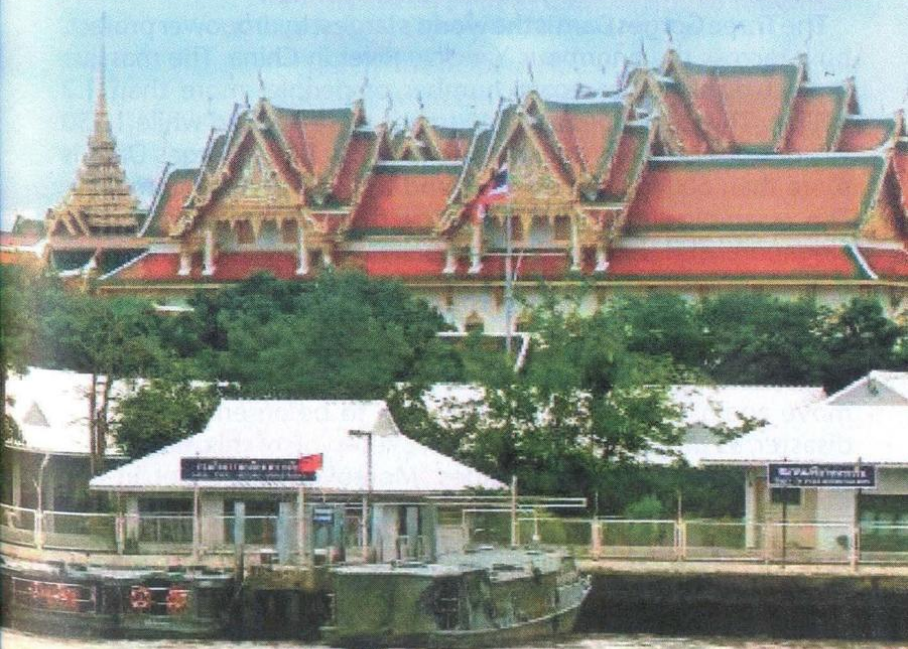
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Why is the Grand Palace in Bangkok historically important?

The Grand Palace in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, is actually a cluster of magnificent buildings that was once the official residence of the Kings of Siam, as Thailand was earlier known. It has numerous halls, pavilions set around open lawns, gardens, and courtyards. It is still used by the present monarch for official events, royal ceremonies, and state functions.

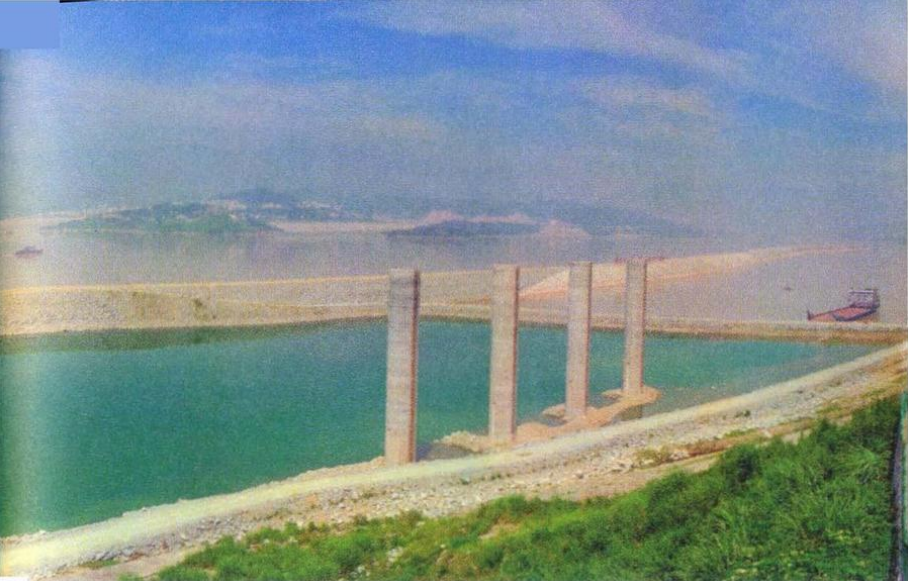




Why is the Three Gorges Dam controversial?

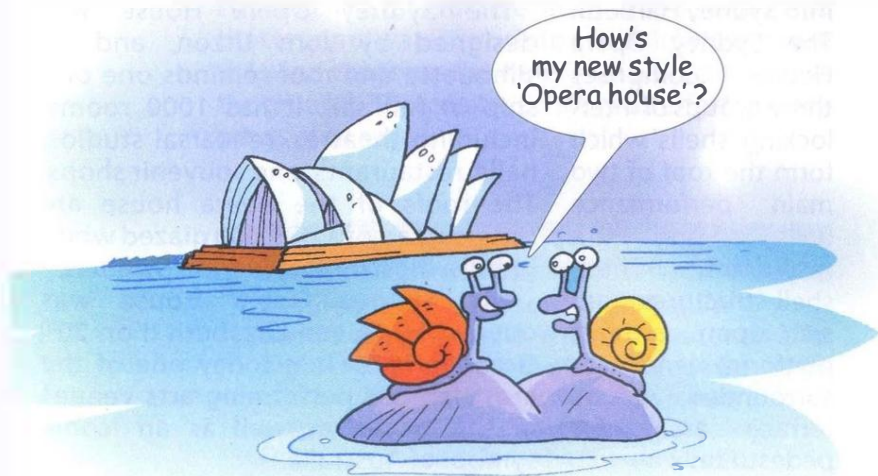
The Three Gorges Dam is the world's largest hydropower project, built across the enormous Yangtze River in China. The massive project displaced a record number of people - more than 1.2 million. Thirteen cities and 140 towns were flooded while 1,350 villages disappeared under water too. The Three Gorges Dam is more than 600 kilometres long, and took 17 years to complete. The reservoir created by the dam covers an area larger than Singapore, and the dam's full capacity of 22.5 gigawatts is more than enough to power Pakistan or Switzerland.

The dam has been at the centre of much controversy. Even after finishing the \$59 billion project last July, the threat of landslides along the dam's banks will force tens of thousands to move again. Many consider the dam to be an environmental disaster, as the rise in water level in a reservoir of this magnitude increases the risks of landslides. Moreover, the water in the reservoir is polluted by the hundreds of factories along the Yangtze that dump their wastes into the river. The construction of the dam has caused massive flooding of the tributaries of the Yangtze too. Is it any wonder that there is a lot of argument as to whether the Three Gorges Dam is a boon or a curse?



Why is the Sydney Opera House the pride of Australia?

The Sydney Opera House is one of the architectural wonders of the 20th century. It is a magnificent urban sculpture set in a remarkable waterscape, at the tip of a peninsula projecting





into Sydney Harbour. The Sydney Opera House comprises three groups of interlocking 'shells' which form the roof of two main performance halls, and a restaurant. These shell-structures are set upon a vast platform, and are surrounded by terrace areas for pedestrians.

The Sydney Opera House was designed by Jorn Utzon, and its silhouette and roof reminds one of a ship in full sail. It has 1000 rooms, including theatres, rehearsal studios, halls, restaurants, and souvenir shops. The roofs of the opera house are constructed of 1,056,000 glazed white granite tiles, imported from Sweden.

The Sydney Opera House was opened by Queen Elizabeth II on 20th October 1973. It is today one of the most famous performing arts venues in the world, as well as an iconic symbol of Australia.



Amazing Roof

The roof of the Sydney Opera house has 2194 precast concrete tiles, and weighs 15 tonnes. It is held together by 321 kilometres of tensioned steel cable, over which 1,056,006 ceramic tiles by a Swedish company have been laid. The tiles, amazingly, clean themselves when it rains!

Why is Angel Falls aptly named?

Angel Falls is a breathtakingly beautiful water fall in Venezuela's Guyana Highlands. The falls leap from the top of a mountain in a remote jungle area, and plunge more than 900 metres down to the river below. Angel Falls is the world's highest waterfall. It is 979 metres in height. This is 15 times the height of Niagara Falls, three times the height of the Eiffel Tower and twice as tall as the Empire State Building. The falls tumble down in two stages, and the curtain of water turns into mist as it falls, because the wind vaporizes the water well before it reaches the ground. This creates an ethereal effect, like the wings of an angel.

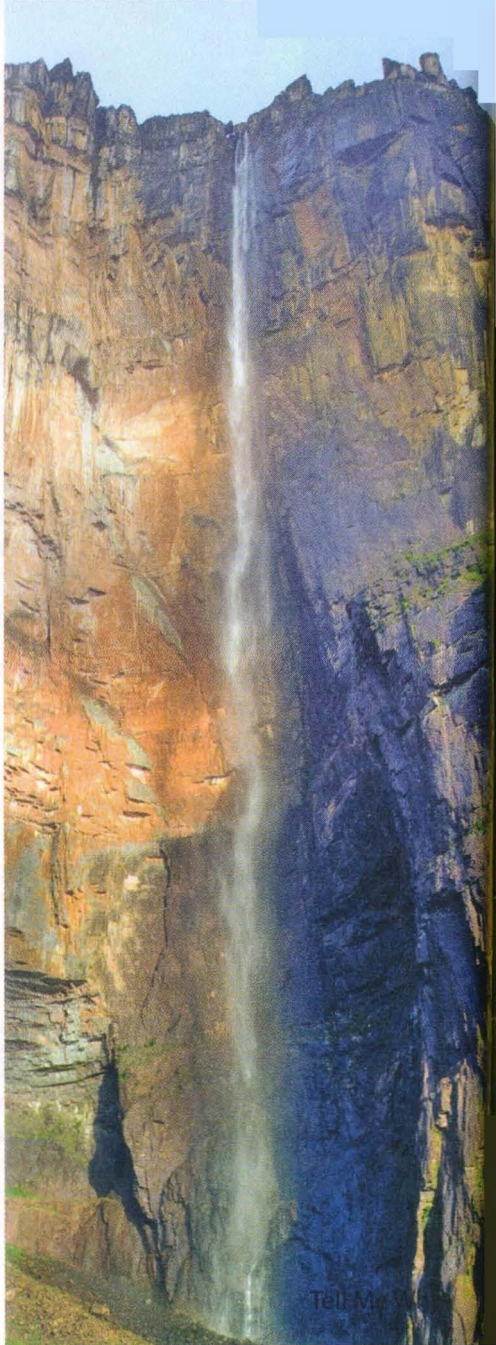
Tall Falls

During the rainy season, Angel Falls is divided into two falls. When the water level is high, the spray from the falls can be felt one and a half kilometres away. This is not surprising, considering that Angel Falls is fifteen times as tall as the Niagara Falls.

However, Angel Falls is actually named after the person who discovered it. Due to its remote location, the magnificent cascade wasn't known to the outside world until 16th November, 1933, when American aviator Jimmie Angel chanced a glimpse of it from the cockpit of his monoplane. Four years later, Angel, with his wife and three companions ventured back to the falls, hiking eleven days through the jungle. When they returned, word spread quickly of his discovery, and the waterfall was named Angel Falls in his honour.

A New Name

Angel Falls was renamed Kerepakupai-meru which means 'Waterfalls from the deepest place', in the local language derived from the Pemón natives .It is also known as Salto Ángel.





First National Park

Yellowstone Park is the world's first National Park. It was established in 1872 to preserve the natural wonders of one of the last, nearly intact, natural ecosystems in the Earth's temperate zone. The idea of national parks started with Yellowstone, and spread worldwide.

Why is Yellowstone National Park exceptional?

The Yellowstone National Park in the USA is truly enormous, and its vast forests cover nearly 9000 square kilometres in three states. It is most famous for its geysers of which there are more than 300- this makes up two thirds of all the geysers on the planet. The extraordinary treasures of Yellowstone include, besides the world's largest collection of geysers, the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River, numerous waterfalls, and great herds of wildlife as well. The park has thousands of hot springs, mud pots, and fumaroles, and over 150 species of fossil plants, ranging from small ferns up to large sequoia, and many other tree species.

The park lies at the headwaters of three major rivers. The Yellowstone River is a major tributary of the Missouri River that flows via the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. The Firehole and Gibbon rivers unite to form the Madison, which also joins the Missouri. The Snake River rises near the park's south boundary, and joins the Columbia to flow into the Pacific. Yellowstone Lake is the largest lake at high elevation in North America, while the Lower Yellowstone Falls is the highest of more than 40 named waterfalls in the park.

The park's bison are the only remaining wild, continuously free-ranging, herds that once covered the Great Plains. Along with other park wildlife, they are one of

the greatest attractions. In fact, Yellowstone National Park has become one of North America's foremost refuges for rare plant and animal species. Magnificent scenery, rare plants and animals, awe-inspiring geysers, and immense diversity all combine to make Yellowstone Park truly exceptional.

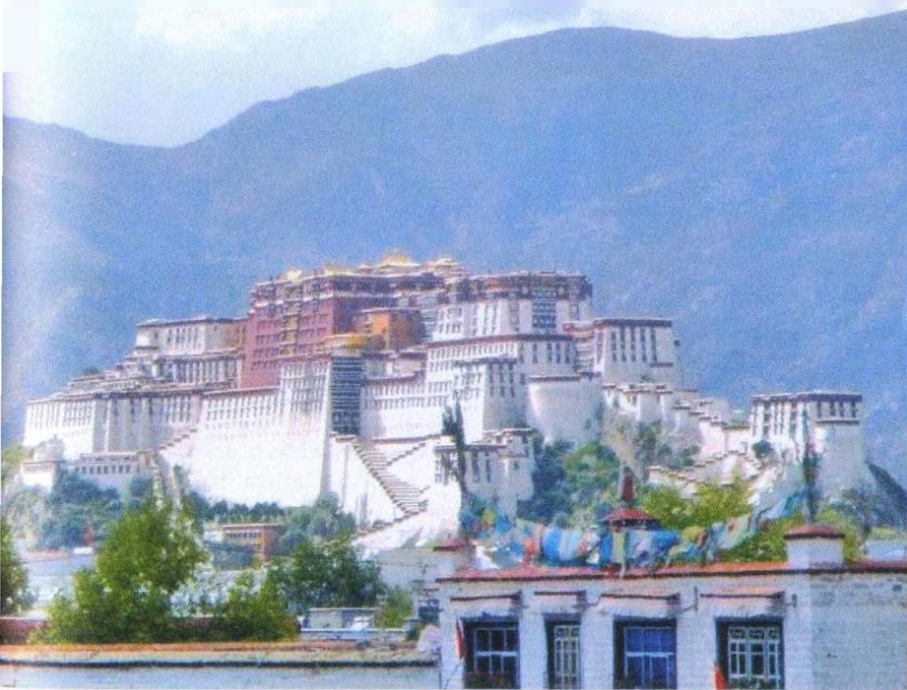


A Bounty of Beauty

Yellowstone National Park is rich in beauty. It

has mountains and rivers, canyons and peaks, waterfalls and lakes, geysers and hot springs, forests and fumaroles, the rarest of wildlife, and the most exotic of plant life. It is also one of the richest sources for water in the Western United States.





Why is the Potala Palace associated with the Dalai Lama?

The Potala Palace sits on the summit of the Marpo Ri or Red Hill in Tibet, and is perhaps the greatest monument in the country. It was the home of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual head of the Buddhists in Tibet, for centuries, and is a symbol of Tibetan Buddhism.

The palace complex is built 3657 metres above sea level, and climbs to 13 storeys. There are over 10,000 shrines and 200,000 statues within the complex, as well as the White and Red Palaces. The palace has over a thousand rooms with exquisite murals, carved columns, and decorations glittering with gold, silver,

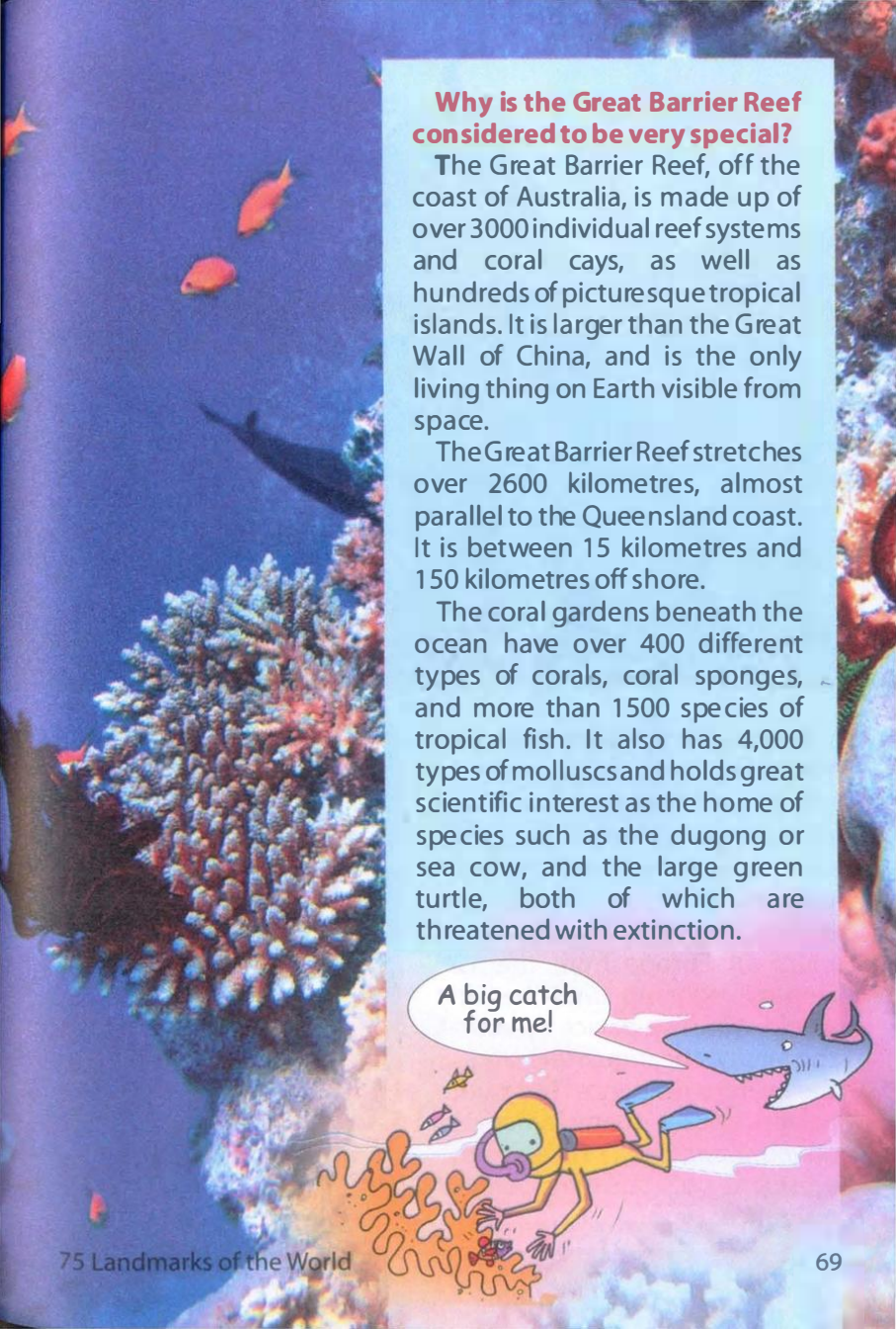


Taipei 101

Taipei 101, whose pinnacle reached full height on October 9th, 2003, is one of the tallest buildings in the world. Located in Taipei, Taiwan, the tower has served as an icon of modern Taiwan ever since it was opened. It is considered to be a harmonious blend of Asian tradition and modern technology, and is designed to withstand typhoons and earthquakes.

Arvind Bhat

pearls, and precious stones. The construction of the palace complex began in 1645 and it took nearly half a century to complete. Since the Dalai Lama is the administrative as well as the spiritual leader of the Tibetans, the palace was built for administrative, as well as spiritual purposes. The present Dalai Lama was forced to flee from Tibet during the Chinese invasion of 1959, and the Potala Palace is now a museum.




Why is the Great Barrier Reef considered to be very special?

The Great Barrier Reef, off the coast of Australia, is made up of over 3000 individual reef systems and coral cays, as well as hundreds of picturesque tropical islands. It is larger than the Great Wall of China, and is the only living thing on Earth visible from space.

The Great Barrier Reef stretches over 2600 kilometres, almost parallel to the Queensland coast. It is between 15 kilometres and 150 kilometres off shore.

The coral gardens beneath the ocean have over 400 different types of corals, coral sponges, and more than 1500 species of tropical fish. It also has 4,000 types of molluscs and holds great scientific interest as the home of species such as the dugong or sea cow, and the large green turtle, both of which are threatened with extinction.



A big catch for me!



Why is the Hofburg Palace of Vienna historically important?

Hofburg Palace in Vienna is one of the largest palaces in Europe. It was the seat of one of the most powerful families in Europe - the Habsburgs. This family ruled much of Europe from the 12th century, right up until the First World War. The palace served as the family's headquarters, and as their winter residence. Today, the palace houses many offices of government, and is also the President of Austria's official residence.



Why is Mount Fuji special to the Japanese?

Mount Fuji holds a special place in the hearts of the Japanese.

It is located on Honshu Island, and rises to a height of 3776 metres, making it Japan's highest mountain. Mount Fuji is the holiest of Japan's 'three holy mountains'.

Every summer, thousands of tourists climb to the summit, to witness the sunrise from there. A beautifully proportioned volcanic cone in a spectacular natural setting, Mount Fuji is beloved for its symmetrical beauty as well. It is a very popular subject in Japanese art, especially in spring, when the snow-covered mountain is framed by pink cherry blossoms.



An Active Volcano

Mount Fuji was formed 600,000 years ago, in four stages of volcanic activity. It erupted last on December 16th 1707. It is still an active volcano.

● *Radha Nair*





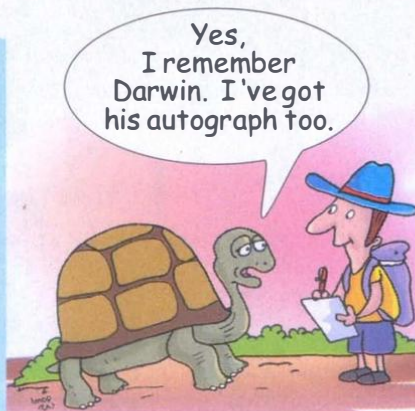
Why were the Galapagos Islands once called The Enchanted Isles?

The Galapagos Islands are a wonder in many ways. Though they are on the equator, their shores are washed by cool currents. These 19 islands lie west of South America, and their remote location has created a world in itself. There are 27 species of reptiles on Galapagos. The Galapagos Islands are most famous for the giant tortoises found here, which give the island its name.

The islands are also home to marine iguanas that resemble little dinosaurs. Hundreds of Galapagos penguins waddle on the island, and the world's only flightless cormorant, the Blue Footed Booby, is also one of the inhabitants. It is this variety of wildlife that makes the Galapagos Islands truly enchanting- in fact, it was once known as The Enchanted Isles.

Darwin's Laboratory

Charles Darwin visited the Galapagos Islands in 1835. He found plants, birds and reptiles that had developed in isolation from the mainland. This fact helped him develop his Theory of Evolution.





Why is the Grand Canyon said to be one of the most dramatic creations of Nature?

Over two billion years ago, Nature began to craft what is today one of the most dramatic natural wonders of this planet- the Grand Canyon, in Arizona, USA.

Over 446 kilometres long, 1.60 kilometres deep in places, and 29 kilometres across at its widest, the Grand Canyon is a testimonial to the erosive power of water, ice, and wind. Carved out by the Colorado River, its vastness takes our breathaway, and the insights it gives us into the history of the Earth are invaluable.

Here, temple like buttes, high plateaus, plains, deserts, forests, cinder cones, lava flows, streams, waterfalls, and one of America's great white water rivers create a spectacular panorama that is truly unforgettable. Its geologic record spans all four eras of the Earth's evolutionary history, as is seen from the numerous caves, fossils and animal remains.

The canyon is a vast biological museum, stretching through five different life and vegetation zones. Over 1,000 plant species have so far been identified, as well as 76 mammal, 299 bird, 16 fish and 41 reptile and amphibian species. The wonder of it all is that the drama that is the Grand Canyon is still going on, as the process of erosion continues.



Rock of Gibraltar

The Rock of Gibraltar is a huge rock found to the south of Spain.


The Rock of Gibraltar is made of limestone that is riddled with caves. More than 30,000 years ago, our ancestors lived in these caves. Gibraltar is, without doubt, the most famous rock in the world.

Why is Mount Everest still growing?

The world's tallest mountain, Mount Everest, is over 8,848 metres high- and it is still growing!

It is situated at the edge of the Tibetan Plateau, on the border between Nepal and Tibet.

Mount Everest is part of the long mountain system known as the



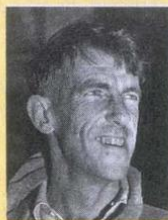
I am waiting here to see Everest growing!

Himalayas. The Himalayas were formed more than 45 million years ago, when two of the rocky plates that lie beneath the Earth's crust crashed against each other, pushing up the area in between them. As these plates are still moving- of course, so slowly that we don't realize it- the Himalayas and Mount Everest are still growing too!

The peak of Mount Everest has three, somewhat flat sides, and is said to be shaped like a three-sided pyramid. Glaciers and ice cover the sides of the mountain, and it is a very cold place indeed. In July, during summer, temperatures are still as low as zero degrees Fahrenheit. In January, temperatures

drop even lower to -76°F . Despite the extreme cold, hurricane-force winds, and low oxygen levels, many people have climbed Mount Everest.

The first successful attempt was by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay in 1953. However, the climb is so difficult and dangerous, that only one person in 10 is successful- and over 200 people have died attempting to climb this beautiful, but forbidding mountain.



Hillary



Tenzing

First on Top

Sir Edmund Hillary, and Tenzing Norgay, became the first people to scale Mount Everest, when they achieved this feat On May 29th, 1953. Junko Tabei of Japan became the first woman to scale Mount Everest on 16th May, 1975.



Why is the Amazon rain forest the world's greatest natural resource?

The Amazon rainforest gets its name from the Amazon River, the life force of the rainforest. It is the world's largest tropical rainforest, and covers some 40 percent of the South American continent. Most of it lies in Brazil, but it also forms a part of eight South American countries.

The Amazon rainforest consists of four layers. Each layer has unique ecosystems, plants, and animals adapted to that system. The first and tallest layer is the emergent layer. Here, trees can be as tall as 60.96 metres, and rise well above the second layer, the canopy. This is the main layer. Most canopy trees have smooth, oval leaves that come to a point, known as a drip tip. This allows water to flow off the leaf quickly, and prevents the growth of fungi, mosses, and lichens. Below the canopy is the third layer or under storey. It gets only about two to five percent of the available sunlight. The plants in this layer find unique ways to adapt to this



shadowy existence. The forest floor is the fourth and lowest layer, and almost no plants grow here. The floor is littered with decomposing vegetation and organisms that are broken down into usable nutrients.

The Amazon Rain forest is an amazing place. Over 500 types of mammals, 175 lizards, and over 300 other reptiles' species, and one third of the world's birds live in the Amazon Rainforest. It is estimated that about 30 million insect types can be found here. The canopy of the rainforest contains half of the world's species of animals. The Amazon Rain forest is considered the world's greatest natural resource.

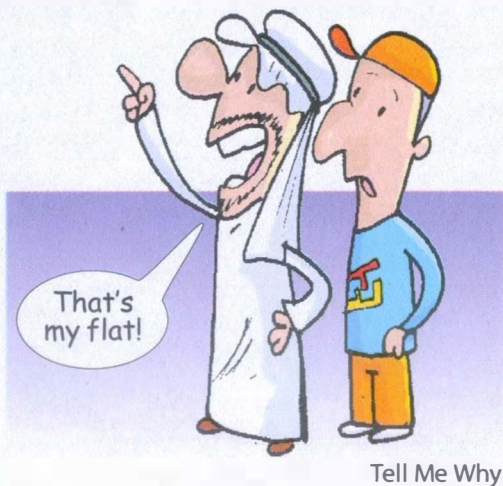




Why is the Burj Khalifa considered to be the jewel of Dubai?

The Burj Khalifa dominates the Dubai skyline, and is the tallest man-made structure in the world. The tower is situated on a man-made lake which is designed to wrap around the tower and to provide dramatic views of it.

The Burj Khalifa is 829.8 metres high, and has 163 floors. It features sky lobbies, swimming pools, recreation rooms, offices, fitness spas, residential spaces, a private club and a public observation deck. The design combines cultural influences with cutting-edge technology to achieve a high-performance building that is considered the jewel of Dubai. The tower was named Burj Khalifa, during its grand opening, in honour of the president of the U.A.E. H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan.

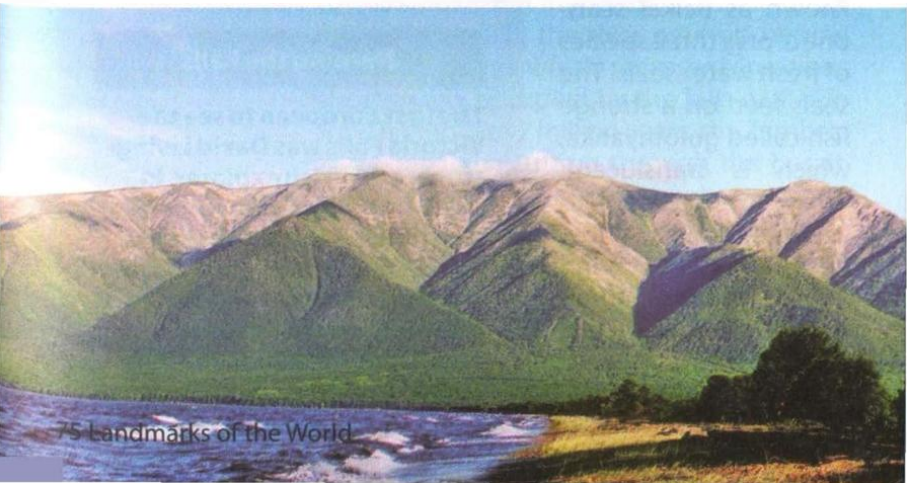




Why is Lake Baikal remarkable in many respects?

Lake Baikal in Siberia is remarkable in many ways. It is the world's oldest lake- between 25 and 30 million years old. It is also the largest freshwater lake in the world, for it holds fully 20 percent of the planets supply of freshwater. It is also the deepest freshwater lake, being more than 1.6 kilometres in depth. The water is unusually transparent, so that one can look though it as through air, and its colour is a soft-turquoise, pleasant to the eye.

Lake Baikal lies almost 457.2 metres above sea level, in a cleft that seems to split Asia apart. Surrounded by one and a half kilometre high snow capped mountains, the lake is spectacularly beautiful. Its cold, oxygen-rich waters teem with bizarre life-forms, some of which are found nowhere else on Earth. It abounds in small seals

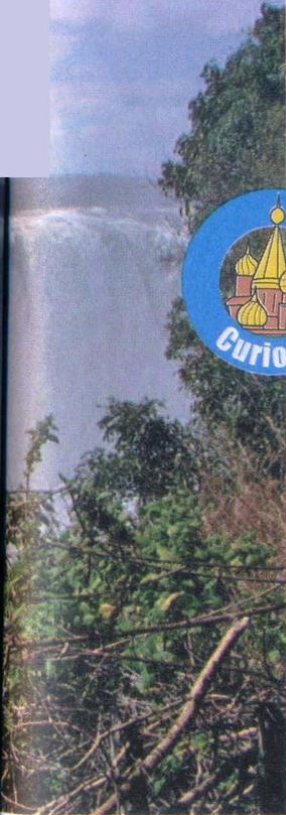




known as Baikal seals—one of only three species of fresh water seals. The seals feed on a strange fish called golomyanka, which is translucent. When exposed to sunlight, these fish just decompose, leaving behind a blob of fat, bone, and oil! Lake Baikal is truly a magnificent natural resource.

Naming the Falls

The first European to see the Victoria Falls was David Livingstone, a Scottish explorer. In 1855, he thrilled the world by describing it, for the first time, to a European audience. He first saw the falls from an island that is now called Livingstone's Island, and he named the falls 'Victoria'.



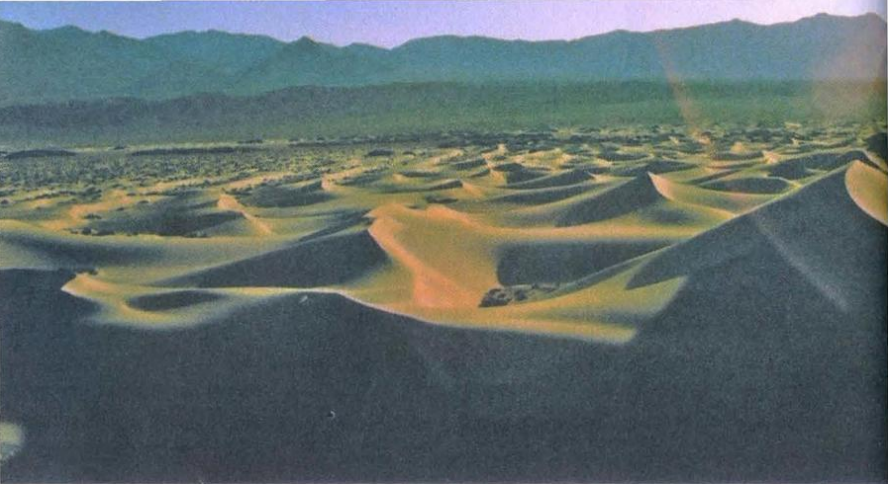
Rain all the Time

Because of the spray from the falls, the rainforest at Victoria Falls is the only place on Earth where it rains 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The spray also creates a rainbow during full moon, which is° called a moonbow.

Why is Victoria Falls a magnificent tribute to the power of water?

Victoria Falls, located on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe, is the largest waterfall in the world. The Zambezi River, which originates in northern Zambia, is the falls water source, and creates the world's largest curtain of water that is more than 1.6 kilometres wide. As the river tumbles down, it throws off an iridescent mist that can be seen more than 20 kilometres away. The roar and the thunder of the waterfall have given it its local name- Mosi-oa-Tunya or 'the smoke that thunders'.

Below the falls, the river enters a narrow series of gorges which represent locations successively occupied by the falls earlier in their history. For 2 million years, the Zambezi River has been cutting through the basalt, and forming a series of retreating gorges. Seven previous waterfalls occupied the seven gorges below the present falls. The falls and their associated gorges are an outstanding example of the erosive forces of the water, which still continues to sculpt the landscape.



Other Names

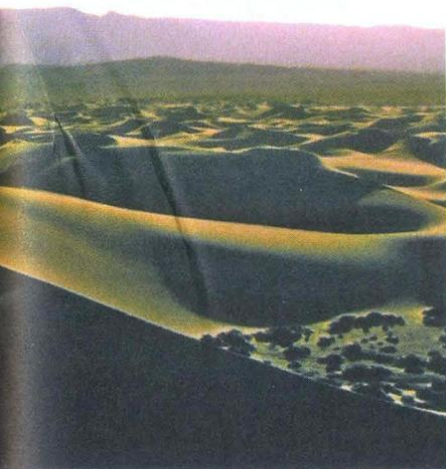
Although the peak is known as Mount Everest all over the world, it has other names too. In Nepal, it is referred to as Mount Sagarmatha, whereas in Tibet, it is referred to as the Chomolangma which means 'Mother Goddess of the Earth'. The Chinese refer to it as the Znumulangma Peak, while the Limbu tribe refers to it as Chajam-lungma.

Why is Death Valley unique?

Death Valley in the Mojave Desert is the lowest point on the continent of North America. It is 82 metres below sea level, and the mountains surrounding it radiate heat, making it one of the hottest places on Earth in summer. The hottest temperature ever recorded was at a place called Furnace Creek in Death Valley in 1913, when the temperature reached a scorching 134 degrees Fahrenheit! In addition, Death Valley is also one of the driest places in North America, for it receives less than 5 cms of rain a year.

In spite of being such a harsh and arid place, Death Valley is beautiful, and full of life. Here

Tell Me Why



one finds spectacularly wind sculpted rocks, richly coloured mudstone hills, mysterious canyons, rippling sand dunes, lush oases, and an immense salt pan surrounded by mountains. On the rare occasions that it rains, wild flowers burst into bloom, amid more than a thousand varieties of plants. The steep mountain slopes are the home of desert bighorn sheep which forage among Joshua trees, scrubby junipers, and pines, while hawks soar above. When night falls, the desert comes alive with bobcats, kit foxes, and rodents. Beautiful and forbidding, vast, yet teeming with life- this is Death Valley, one of the most fascinating places on Earth.

Goodbye Death Valley

Death Valley got its name during the California gold rush in 1849. A wagon train headed for California got lost in the desert. The people in the wagon train suffered great hardship, and when they finally found their way out, someone is supposed to have looked back in relief and said 'Goodbye Death Valley', giving the valley its morbid name.

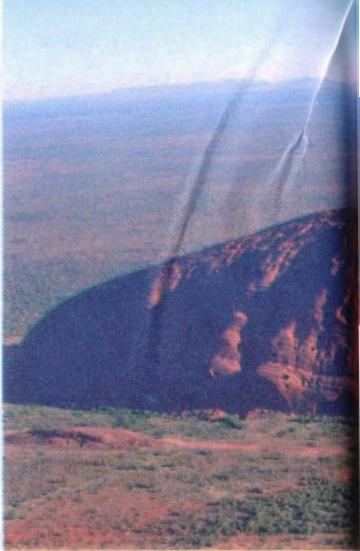
Why is Fingal's Cave astonishing?

Fingal's Cave is astonishing in its structure. This sea cave is astounding because of its hexagonal columns of basalt. Neat six-sided pillars form its interior walls.

Fingal's Cave is located on the uninhabited island of Staffa, off the coast of Scotland. It has large arched entrance that is filled by the sea. Any sound in the cave echoes and re-echoes, creating weird effects that make the cave seem a little spooky.

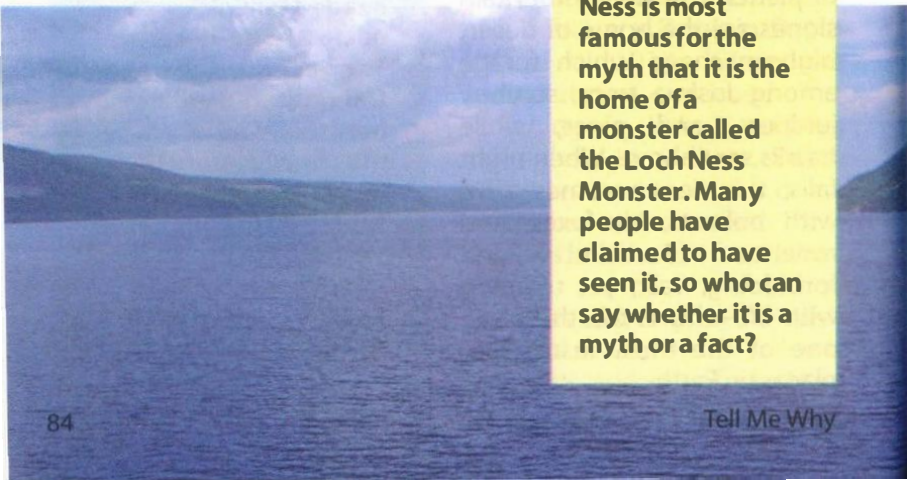
The cave was formed by an enormous mass of hot lava cooling so slowly that, like mud under the hot sun, it cracked into long hexagonal forms. The violent action of the waves over thousands of years created the opening to the cave.

Fingal, after whom this cave is named, was an Irish general who came to Scotland, and there are many stories about his bravery and strength.



Loch Ness

Loch Ness is a narrow lake that nestles among the rugged mountains of Scotland. Loch Ness is most famous for the myth that it is the home of a monster called the Loch Ness Monster. Many people have claimed to have seen it, so who can say whether it is a myth or a fact?





Why is Ayers Rock considered an icon of Australia?

Ayers Rock, in the Northern Territories of Australia, is also called Uluru, which is the name given to it by the aboriginal tribes who have lived in the area for more than 10,000 years. It was named Ayer's Rock in 1873, in honour of Sir Henry Ayers, the Chief Secretary of Southern Australia at that time, but its official name is now once again Uluru.

Uluru is a huge sandstone rock formation that has been shaped by the elements, some 600 million years ago. The surface is made up of valleys, caves, and weird shapes that were created through erosion over millions of years. Surface oxidation of its iron content gives the rock a striking orange-red hue.

Depending on weather conditions and light, the huge rock can change its colour from a pale grey-red into a glowing orange, or even fiery red, and after that, fade again.



Discovery

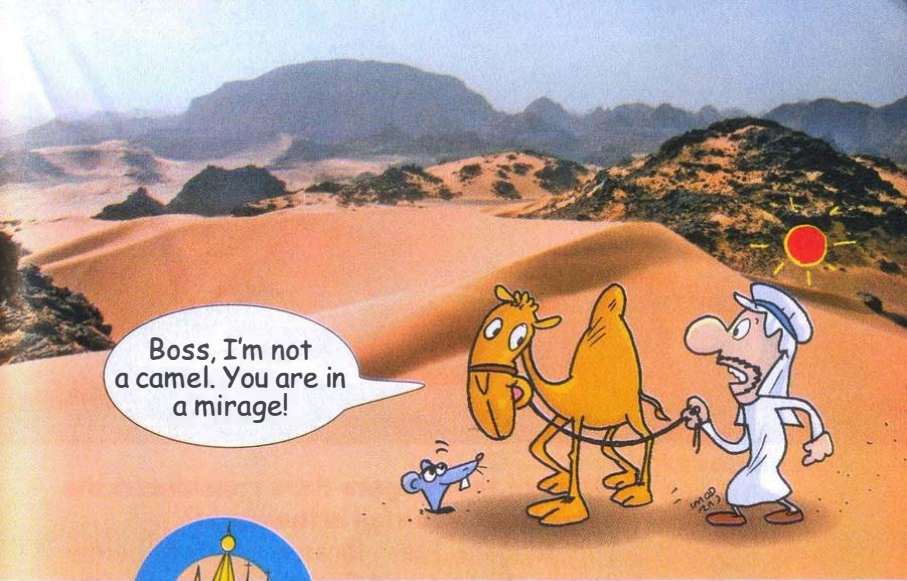
The outside world learnt about the Fingal's Cave only when naturalist Sir Joseph Banks visited it in 1772. At the time of Banks discovery, 'Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books', was a very popular poetic series. The book had a tremendous impact on Sir Banks, who promptly named the Scottish cave, which already had the name Uamh-Binn, 'Fingal's Cave'.

● *Sneha Rao*

Why was Table Mountain given this name?

Table Mountain is named after its flat top, which resembles a table top. It is believed to be one of the oldest mountains in the world, and overlooks Cape Town and Table Bay. The unusual shape is the result of nearly horizontal layers of sandstone being exposed to vigorous wind and water erosion. Its stark, scarred long northern face contrasts with the fertile summit plateau that is broken by small valleys and streams.

Table Mountain has its own cloud cover known as the Tablecloth, which forms rapidly when the wind is in the southeast. There are more than 1470 species of plants on the plateau, and the abundant vegetation includes tropical disa orchids, 250 species of daisies, and silver trees, while the animal life includes tahrs or Himalayan goats.



Changing Climate

The climate in Sahara has changed a number of times. Before the present dry period, which started some 5000 years ago, there was a wet period lasting around 6000 years. The large reservoirs of underground water beneath the Sahara Desert are proof that the Sahara was once a wet region.

Why is the Sahara Desert an awesome phenomenon?

The Sahara gets its name from the Arabic word for 'deserts'. It is the largest hot desert in the world.

The Sahara is more than 4828 kilometres from east to west, across the full length of northern Africa, and 1287-1931 kilometres from north to south.

Most of its landscape has been shaped over time by wind, and includes constantly shifting sand dunes, sand seas called ergs, barren stone plateaus, enormous gravel plains, dry valleys and salt flats, and lush oases. There are also several mountain ranges within the Sahara, and many are volcanic. The Sahara Desert is divided into different geographic zones.



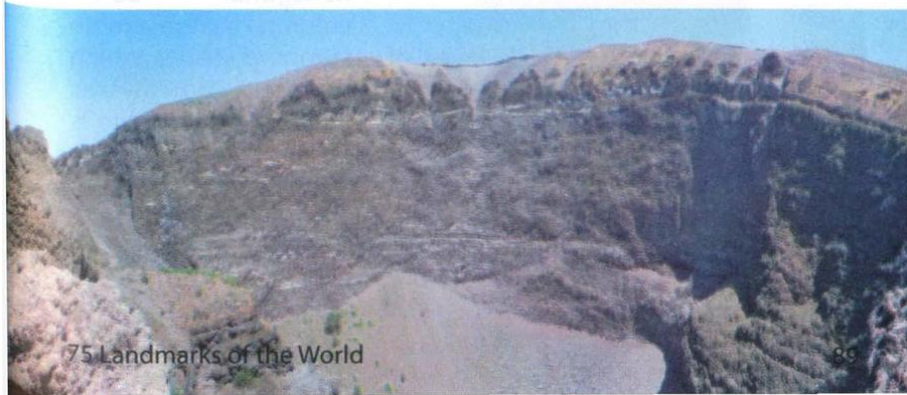
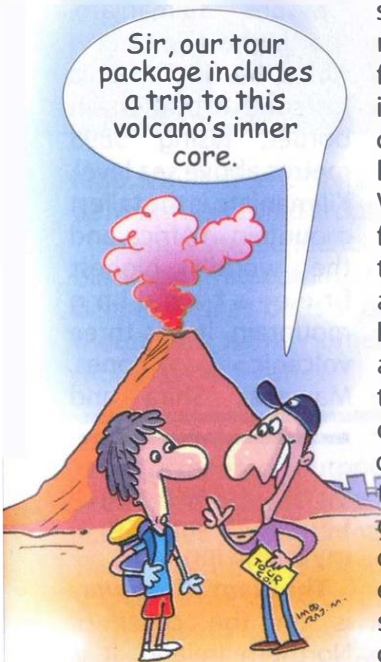
Why are the Niagara Falls considered the most famous waterfall in the world?

The Niagara Falls, located on the border between the USA and Canada, may not be the largest, or the tallest waterfall in the world, but it is definitely the most famous.

Niagara Falls was carved by centuries of melting glaciers and water erosion. It is the second largest waterfall in the world. Niagara Falls is actually made up of three separate falls that are all close in proximity. They are the American Falls, the Bridal Veil Falls, and the Horseshoe Falls. The American Falls are located in the US. The Horseshoe Falls are located in Canada. The Falls are extremely wide. The largest, Horseshoe Falls, gets its name from its shape. The water itself is a beautiful bluegreen in colour, and 6 million cubic feet of water hurtle down every minute. Together, the Falls present a wondrous spectacle, as great bands of water plummet over the edge, and create a resonating roar down below. Even in winter, when the flow is partially hidden and the edges freeze solid, Niagara Falls reminds us just how amazing our natural world is.

Why is Mount Vesuvius historically important?

Mount Vesuvius is an active volcano situated in Southern Italy. It rises 1,277 metres above the Bay of Naples, and its fiery eruptions have claimed a high toll in lives and property through the centuries. The most famous of these happened in AD 79, when Mount Vesuvius erupted, after being dormant for centuries. The eruption devastated the prosperous Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and killed thousands. It threw up a mushroom cloud of ash and pumice into the stratosphere. For the next 12 hours, volcanic ash and a hail of pumice stones up to 7.5 cms in diameter, showered on Pompeii, forcing the city's occupants to flee in terror. A giant cloud of hot ash and gas surged down the western flank of Vesuvius, engulfing Herculaneum, and burning or suffocating all who remained. This lethal cloud was followed by a flood of volcanic mud and rock that buried the city. The



Serengeti

The Serengeti is a vast lush plain in Africa. It has been inhabited by the Masai people for millions of years. Serengeti is famous for the mass migration of animals every October and April, when over hundreds of thousands of animals go on the move to fresh feeding grounds.



cities, buried under a thick layer of volcanic material and mud, were never rebuilt, and were largely forgotten for centuries.

In the 18th century, Pompeii and Herculaneum were rediscovered and excavated, providing important insights into an ancient civilization that has been perfectly preserved.

Why is Mount Kilimanjaro an interesting mountain?

Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest point in Africa, lies in Tanzania just south of the Kenyan border. Rising 5895 metres above sea level, Kilimanjaro is the tallest mountain in Africa, and the world's highest free-standing mountain. It has three volcanic cones, Mawenzi, Shira and

Why is the Giant's Causeway a place of myth and legend?

The Giant's Causeway is on the coast of Northern Ireland. It is an area of unique hexagonal basalt columns that resemble stepping stones which disappear downwards into the sea. The site is also popular with geologists, and, according to them, the Giant's Causeway was formed some 50-60 million years ago as a

Tell Me Why

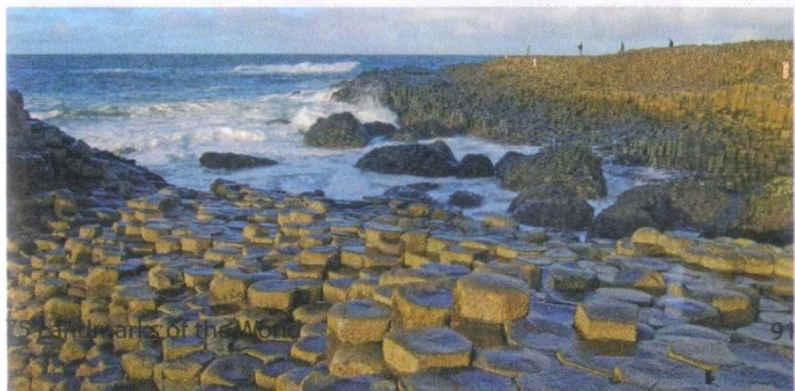


Kibo. Mawenzi and Shira are extinct, but Kibo, the highest peak, is dormant and could erupt again.

You may see elephants, buffalo, and eland on the northern slope, black and white colobus monkeys, and Sykes monkeys in the forest belt, as well as birds such as sun birds and augur buzzards. The mountain's name comes from 'Kilma Njaro' meaning 'shining mountain' in Swahili.

result of repeated outpourings of volcanic basalt. Sea birds can be seen off the coast around the Causeway, with species such as fulmar, petrel, cormorant, and razorbill being frequently observed. Rare and unusual plant species including sea spleenwort, and frog orchid can be found on the cliffs and nearby rock formations.

The Giant's Causeway is steeped in myth and legend. Some say these columns are stepping stones carved from the rocky coast by the mighty giant, Finn McCool.



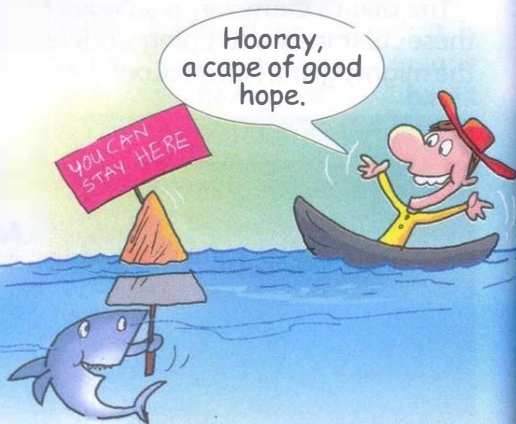


Why is the Cape of Good Hope of special significance to sailors?

The Cape of Good Hope is a rocky promontory at the tip of the peninsula just outside the city of Cape Town in South Africa. It was named by the 15th century Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias who was searching for the southern limits of the African continent. He named the place the 'Cape of Storms', but later changed it to 'Cape of Good Hope'.

The cape plays an important role in South African history as a stopping point for trading ships sailing between Europe and European colonies in the east. It marks the point where a ship begins to travel more eastward than southward, as it sails along the coast of Africa.

As one of the great capes of the South Atlantic Ocean, the Cape of Good Hope has been of special significance to sailors for many years.





Why is the the Dead Sea so salty?

The Dead Sea is not really a sea, it is actually a land locked lake between Israel and Jordan. The water is so salty that nothing –plants or fish- can live in it, and that is why it is called 'dead'.

There are several rivers and streams that feed into the Dead Sea, but none that drain out.

One of the reasons the Dead Sea is so salty is because there are no outlets. The minerals that flow into it stay there forever. As water cannot flow out, evaporation is the only way water is released from the sea. With the hot temperatures, the water evaporates fairly quickly. Over 7 million tonnes of water evaporates per day from the Dead Sea. As this occurs, it leaves behind any dissolved minerals in the sea, increasing its saltiness.

The Dead Sea holds some of the saltiest water in the world, and is almost six times as salty as the ocean. Moreover, since it is located in a desert, there is very little rainfall to dilute its saltiness.

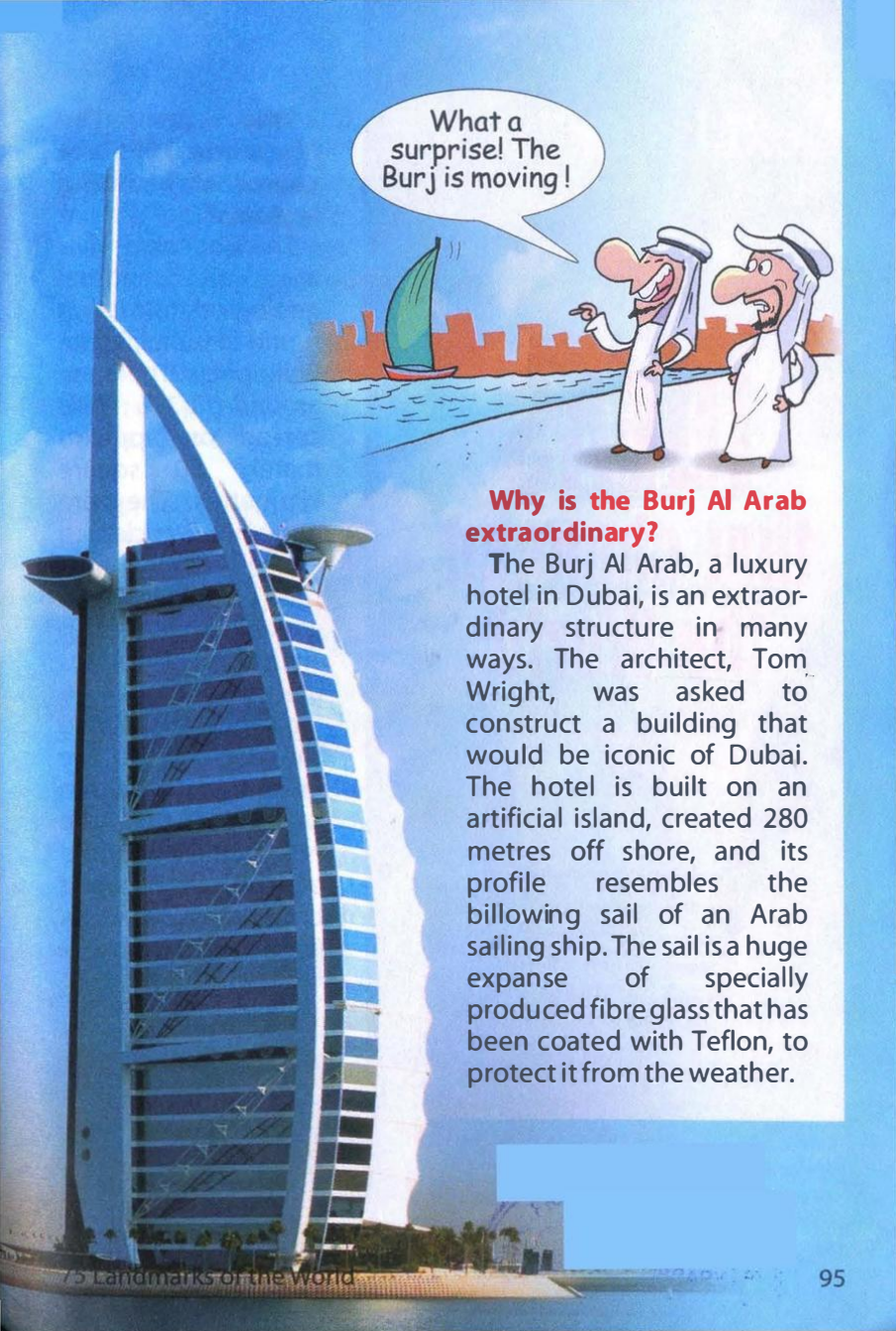


Why is Bryce Canyon different from other canyons?

Bryce Canyon is not a canyon at all but a collection of giant natural amphitheatres that are found on the South Eastern edge of the Paunsagunt Plateau in South Western Utah, USA. It was named after Ebenezer Bryce, a pioneer who settled in the area in 1874.

Bryce Canyon is famous for its delicate rock spires called hoodoos that have been formed by the forces of erosion. For millions of years, water has carved Bryce's rugged landscape. Water splits rock as it freezes and expands in cracks. In summer, runoff from cloudbursts etches into the softer limestones, and sluices through the deep clefts. This erosion has resulted in the creation of colourful pinnacles called hoodoos. The red, orange, and white colours of the rocks make them a spectacular sight indeed.

Some local Paiute Indians believe that animal-like creatures that changed themselves into people once lived here. But these creatures were bad, and were punished by being turned into rocks. The creatures still huddle together here with faces painted just as they were before being turned to stone!

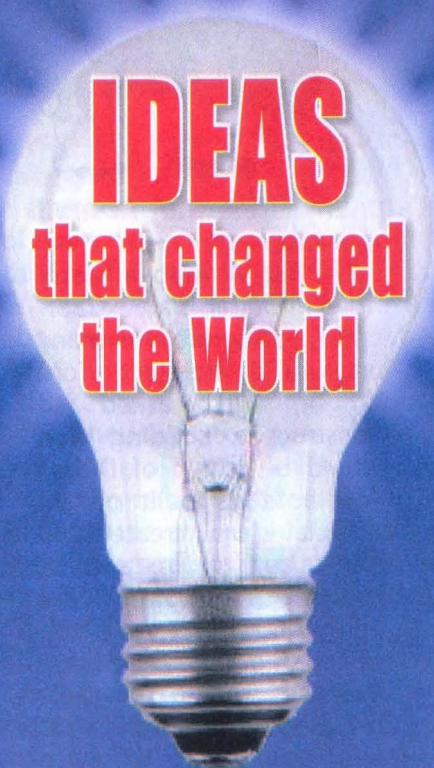


What a surprise! The Burj is moving!

Why is the Burj Al Arab extraordinary?

The Burj Al Arab, a luxury hotel in Dubai, is an extraordinary structure in many ways. The architect, Tom Wright, was asked to construct a building that would be iconic of Dubai. The hotel is built on an artificial island, created 280 metres off shore, and its profile resembles the billowing sail of an Arab sailing ship. The sail is a huge expanse of specially produced fibre glass that has been coated with Teflon, to protect it from the weather.

Next Issue



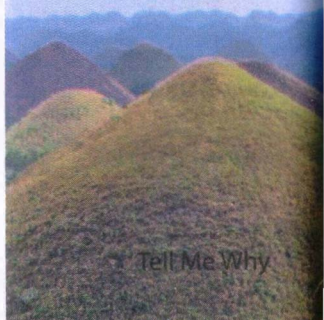
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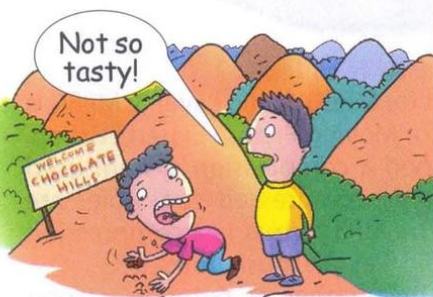
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**Why are The
Chocolate Hills the
source of beautiful
legends?**

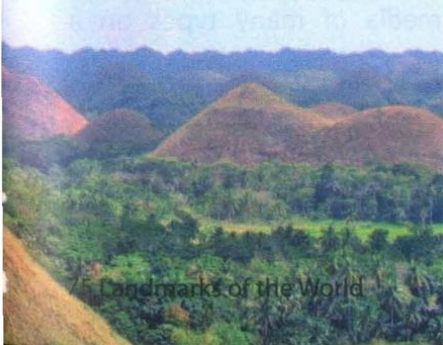
The Chocolate Hills are an unusual geological formation found in Bohol, in the Philippines. There are around 1,776 hills spread on approximately 50 square kilometres. They are actually haycock hills, which are mounds that are conical and almost symmetrical in shape. The mounds are of grass covered limestone, but during the dry season, the grass turns brown in colour so that the hills look like a brand of conically shaped chocolates known as 'chocolate kisses' - hence the name.



The unusual shape and colour of The Chocolate Hills have given rise to many legends. The most popular one tells of two rival giants who threw rocks and boulders at each other for days. Exhausted, the giants forgot about their meaningless conflict, became friends, and left the island without cleaning up the mess they made.



Another myth tells the story of Arogo, a young, powerful giant who fell in love with Aloya, a girl. When she died, Arogo shed thousands of tears, and when they dried up, they formed the Chocolate Hills.



Clarifications & Corrections



Ganesh D. Vernekar, a student of class 10, Pavan English Medium High School, Dharwad, Karnataka has pointed out an error in the October issue of Tell Me Why, 'Birds of Prey'. He writes that, on Page 58, the photo of Brown Owl is wrongly given along with the write up on Lined Forest Falcon.

Thank you Ganesh for your valuable feedback. The photos of both birds are shown below with the correct captions.

- Editor



▲
*Lined
Forest
Falcon*

◀
Brown Owl

I Wonder Why?

Question of the Month

Send us your questions

E mail: childrensdivision@mmp.in



Why is an MP 3 file called so?

MP 3 is short for MPEG Audio Layer 3. MPEG is the acronym for Moving Picture Experts Group, which developed a compression system used for audio data. Uncompressed audio files are rather large. The MP3 format is a compression system for audio files like music, talks, etc.

It reduces the number of bytes in a song without affecting the quality of sound, so that the memory space it takes up in the computer is less. The aim of the MP3 format is to compress a song by a factor of 10 to 14 without noticeably affecting its sound quality.

MP3 and MP4 sound similar, but they are rather different. MP4 is a media container format used to store media of many types on a computer.



● DevNath

MANORAMA TELL ME WHY - 75 LANDMARKS OF THE WORLD

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